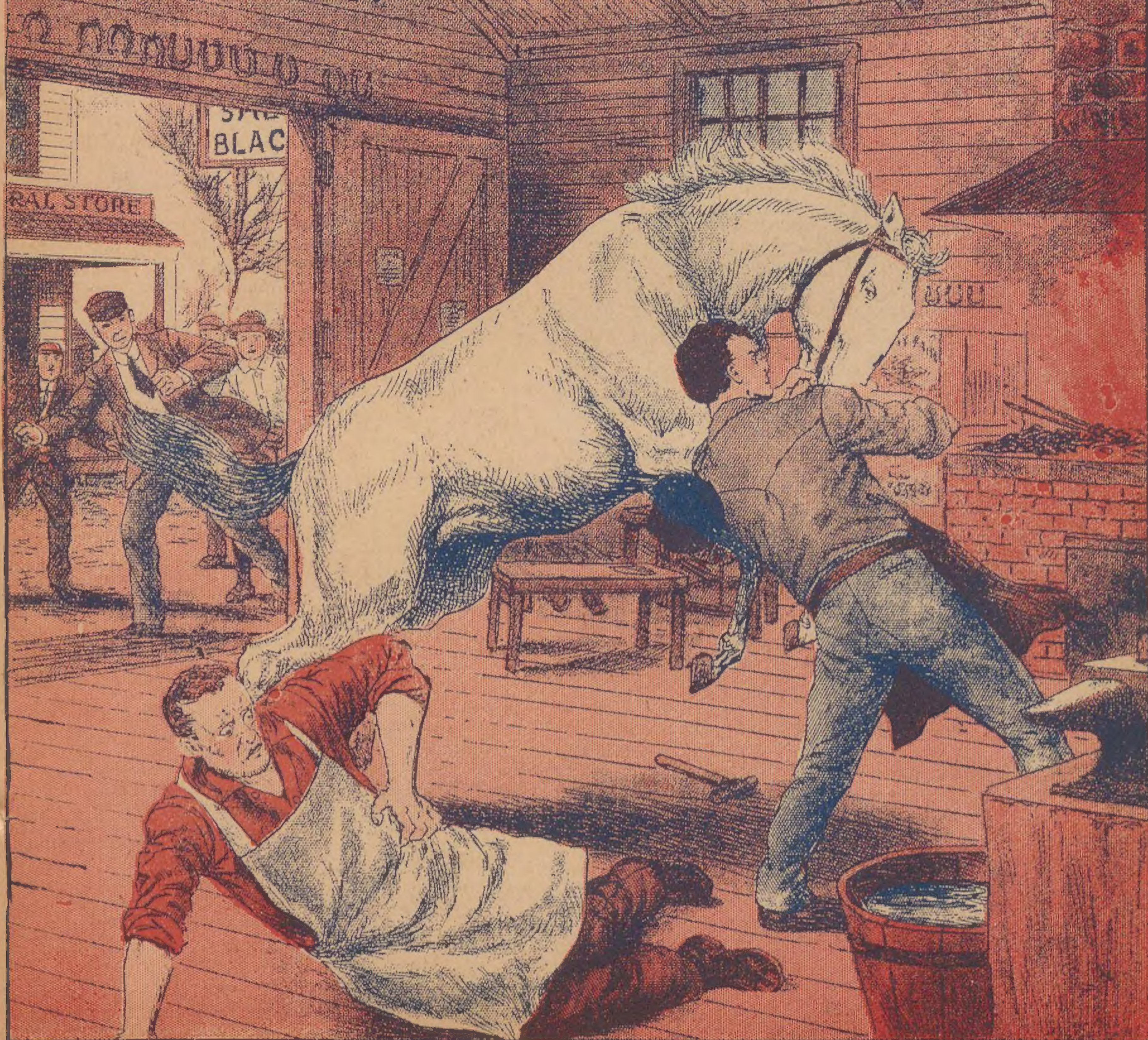


FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY.

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY.

SAMSON, THE BOY BLACKSMITH,
OR, FROM THE ANVIL TO FORTUNE *By A SELF-MADE MAN.*



"No you don't, you brute!" cried Joe, bracing himself and gripping the vicious animal tightly by the nostrils as he started to plunge forward after flooring the blacksmith.
"You've done all the damage you're going to do in this shop."

FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY

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Samson, the Boy Blacksmith

OR, FROM THE ANVIL TO FORTUNE

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I.—Taming a Vicious Brute.

"You ought to join the circus, Joe," remarked Martin Rulofson the village blacksmith, as his husky-looking assistant, whose age could not have been more than eighteen, lifted the heavy anvil and moved it a yard back from its former position.

"Why should I join a circus?" replied the boy after putting down his burden in its new resting place.

"Because you're so strong," replied the blacksmith. "You're a wonder. I have never seen your equal in strength, and I've met some pretty strong men in my time. I consider myself a muscular man, but you can beat me all hollow at lifting weights and handling heavy things generally, not to speak of your other feats, which have made you talked about in the village. You've got sinews of steel and muscles of the same caliber. And most singular of all, you're a namesake of your biblical prototype—Samson. It's a curious coincidence that your name should be Samson. Upon my word it is."

"I'm not responsible for that."

"I know that. Was your father a strong man, too?"

"No. He had only the strength of the average man."

"Maybe your mother was a large and powerful woman."

"No. She was quite the opposite."

"Any of your ancestors remarkable for their strength?"

"Not to my knowledge."

"You've inherited a splendid physique, at any rate. Any idea how you acquired your unusual strength?"

"I came by it naturally, for I have been very strong ever since I can remember. I suppose continuous exercise has helped to develop it."

"Young Samson, the Strong Boy, would sound well on the circus bills," smiled the blacksmith.

"With my picture in the middle, holding up a couple of 500-pound dumbbells, with one hand," laughed the boy good-naturedly.

"That would be a gross exaggeration, for no man has ever been known to be capable of lifting 1,000 pounds with one hand. How much do you suppose you could lift?"

"I don't know. I never tested the matter."

"That anvil weighs over 300 pounds, and I wouldn't care to tackle it single-handed like you did."

"I knew I was lifting something when I swung it over there."

"I'll warrant you did. Well, I don't want to put the circus idea into your head, for I'd hate to lose you. You're the best assistant, and the best boy, too, I've ever had."

"Thank you, Rulofson. I appreciate your good opinion, and I can return the compliment by saying that you're the best boss I've ever had. Now that the anvil is out of the way, let's get Haggerty's stallion in here and put the new set of shoes on him he's waiting for."

"I hate to tackle the brute," said the blacksmith, getting up and looking toward the door, where a big, restive, brown animal was tied to a ring by a stout rope. "He's a vicious brute. I don't think I'd touch him if I didn't have you to hold on to him. It's almost as much as a man's life is worth to shoe him. They say he's maimed several blacksmiths. At any rate, he's the terror of the county, and no man will shoe him a second time for any price. I've charged Haggerty a stiff figure for doing the job, for I know nobody else wants it; and I'm not quite easy in my mind as to how I'll come out, even with you to second me."

"Don't worry. The horse won't get away from me once I get a good grip on him," said the boy confidently.

He walked toward the door, where a small bunch of men and boys, who had recognized the animal, was beginning to gather, in anticipation that something exciting was on the tapis.

Unloosening the stallion, whereat the crowd scattered to a safe distance, he led him into the shop. The animal seemed docile enough at the moment, but a close observer would have noticed a wicked look in his eye. He was a treacherous brute, and was simply biding his time. He knew as well, as if he were a human being, that he was about to be shod, and that was an operation he always resented.

He concerned himself little with Joe, who walked him inside, but watched the burly blacksmith, whom he regarded as an enemy, out of the corner of his eye.

Rulofson picked up his nail box and brought it

forward. His first move was the removal of one of the worn kind shoes. With pincers in hand he approached the hind quarters of the stallion with more than his customary caution, and then with a swift movement he grabbed the horse just above the hoof and raised his leg to swing it across his lap, as he stood in a crouching position. The bunch of spectators closed about the big door, a look of intense interest resting on every feature. They expected something would happen, and something did. Quick as a flash of lightning the animal launched out both hind feet, planting his forelegs so close to Joe's feet that the boy had to hop back to save them. Rulofson, though on his guard, was flung like a feather to one side on the hard boards. The lookers on uttered exclamations of excitement and dismay, thinking that the horse would swing around and kick out the blacksmith's brains.

"No, you don't, you brute!" cried Joe, bracing himself and gripping the vicious animal tightly by the nostrils as he started to plunge forward after flooring the blacksmith. "You've done all the damage you're going to do in this shop."

The stallion, balked in his purpose of starting in to wreck the shop, tried to shake himself free from the boy's grip. But he was unable to do so, and the pressure on his nostrils greatly handicapped him, for it interfered with his breathing, and without sufficient breath he could not use his strength. He first tugged and then tried to rear up, but Joe had a grip of steel on him, and not for an instant did the plucky boy give the animal the least relief. It was a tussle for supremacy between the two, and young Samson won out.

When the stallion appeared ready to drop, and was giving the most poignant symptoms of distress and weakness, Joe let up by degrees, until he finally released his grip on his nostrils altogether.

The animal stood trembling like an aspen leaf, his eyes peering into the boy's with a look of fear and astonishment, for never before had he been conquered in such an effective manner. Then Joe began to stroke his nose and talk to him in a calm, decided way. The stallion's ears were thrown forward as if drinking in all the boy said.

"Now, old boy, you're going to allow yourself to be shod, and you're not going to make any more fuss over it—understand?" And Joe laid his fingers firmly on his nostrils, but did not squeeze them, as a kind of hint of what would happen if the animal did not heed his words.

The horse's spirit seemed to be broken for the time, and he hung his head in a dejected way.

He recognized the fact that Joe was his master, and when a horse arrives at that conclusion he is conquered.

"Get busy, Rulofson," said the boy. "I've got him tamed. You can shoe him now with perfect safety."

"By George, Joe, you've done something that nobody else in the country, not even his owner, could do! That is, master the brute. You deserve a medal."

"Hurrah for Joe Samson!" shouted a small boy at the door.

"Cut it out," replied Joe, "or you'll frighten the animal."

The crowd subsided, and watched the black-

smith shoe Haggerty's terror, as he was called. Not an ugly move did the stallion make during the process. You'd have thought he was the gentlest creature in the world. By the time Rulofson had finished, the news of Joe's feat had spread around the neighborhood, and the crowd had grown to considerable proportions.

"Come, old boy, we're going outside," said Joe to the horse. "You've got a fine pair of shoes on, and you ought to feel proud of them."

He stroked the animal's nose in a friendly way and then marched him toward the doorway. The crowd fell back to a respectable distance, and then stood in a semicircle, looking on while the boy retied the stallion to the ring. He patted the horse, tickled his ears, and finally produced some lumps of sugar from his pocket, which he had provided himself with.

"You deserve something for behaving yourself," said Joe, so eat up this sugar."

The horse ate the sugar and then rubbed his nose against Joe's arm. The spectators fairly gasped at this remarkable exhibition.

"I believe you could do anything with that animal now, Joe," said Rulofson, who had come to the door. "He seems to have a whole lot of respect for you."

Joe laughed, patted the horse again, and walked into the shop to help the blacksmith on another job—the repairing of a part of a wagon.

A little later, when Haggerty came down the street after his stallion, he was stopped by a man who related to him what had happened at the blacksmith shop. Haggerty was not a little surprised to learn that Joe Samson had mastered his horse. He was stopped half a dozen times before he reached the shop by other spectators with the same story to tell. When he walked up to his equine property he soon saw that the horse had experienced a change of heart.

"How did you do it, Samson?" he asked Joe when he stepped inside to pay his bill.

"That's one of my business secrets," laughed the boy.

"I'm afraid the good impression won't last," said Haggerty. "He's got a bad streak in him, and what's bred in the bone is pretty hard to do away with."

"Well, when you want him shod again fetch him here, and I'll guarantee we'll do it without any trouble," replied the boy, poking a piece of iron into the forge and working the bellows till the end of it had acquired a white heat. Then he took it over to the anvil and began beating it into shape. Long before Joe finished his work for the day everybody in the village had heard about his victory over Haggerty's stallion, and the people marveled at his success, and wondered how he accomplished it.

CHAPTER II.—Joe Offered a New Job.

Joe boarded with Rulofson. He was an orphan, who had drifted into the village of Blackheath one winter's day six months before the opening of our story. He stopped at the blacksmith shop to warm himself, and Rulofson, noting his stalwart make-up, and being in want of a helper, had offered him work; and Joe, being down on

his luck, had accepted the offer. Since then the two had become the best of friends. The boy had also made himself very popular with Jennie Rulofson, who kept house for her father, Mrs. Rulofson, being dead. His good looks captured the girl's fancy, and she declared he was the best-natured boy she had ever met. Nothing seemed to disturb the even tenor of his disposition.

Whatever he thought of Jennie, he certainly treated her very nicely. If she wanted to go out of an evening, he was always ready to act as her escort, and she was very proud to be seen in his company. Half the girls in the village set their caps for him, but their efforts to cut Jennie out proved fruitless. The boys were jealous of him at first, and were not pleased at his advent in Blackheath, but that feeling didn't last, particularly after they discovered what a powerful boy he was. Only one lad went so far as to force a scrap on him, and when the belligerent youth picked himself out of a thick clump of bushes several yards away he concluded to call the matter off for good.

Joe's impromptu exhibitions of strength won the respect and admiration of his new associates, and he was regarded as a wonder in the muscular line. There was one boy in Blackheath who disliked Joe very much indeed. This was Henry Carter, whose father was a lawyer and president of the village bank. As Mr. Carter was considered one of the most important men in the village, because he had a pull with the county politicians, was pretty well off, all things considered, and lived in the most pretentious house in the place, his son had come to regard himself as a personage of considerable importance, too. He dressed much better than the other boys, put on airs that didn't fit him very well, and then wondered why he was not popular among his associates. The real cause of the "grouch" Henry Carter entertained against Joe Samson was Jennie Rulofson. Jennie was the prettiest and most sprightly girl in the village, and Carter was smitten with her charms. Although the girl had never encouraged his attentions, still the lawyer's son had hopes of winning her over until Joe came on the scene.

After that Jennie had eyes only for her father's young assistant, and Carter realized that his aspirations were squelched. To be cut out by a common blacksmith's helper was gall and wormwood to his soul. He could not understand why Jennie should prefer the society of a "waif from nowhere," as he called Joe, to him. But the fact remained that she did, and he was disgusted and angry over it.

"She shows mighty poor taste," he grumbled. "I am a gentleman's son, and I expect to go to college and become a lawyer, like my father. One of these days the house and all my folks own will come to me, and I'll be well fixed, which is more than any other boy in this village can say. I'll bet any other girl around here would fall over herself to catch me for her best fellow, and that's what I would like to be to Jennie, but the little fool won't have me."

Among those who heard about Joe's feat of subduing Haggerty's horse was Mr. Carter. Tales of the boy's strength had reached him often before, but this last exhibition seemed more wonderful than anything he had yet done in the village. Mr. Carter had just received word that the

watchman of the bank had been taken ill with pneumonia, and wouldn't be able to show up on duty for at least two or three weeks. It was necessary to hire a substitute at once. It struck Mr. Carter that Joe Samson would be just the person for the job. Whether he could hire him or not to fill the vacancy was the question. However, he determined to try, and he sent his gardener around to the blacksmith shop with a request that the boy would call on him right away. Rulofson had gone home, and Joe was just closing up when the gardener appeared. He was surprised at the message, for he was not acquainted with the lawyer.

"Do you know what Mr. Carter wants to see me about?" he asked the gardener.

"I do not," replied the man.

"Did you say he wanted to see me at once?"

"That's what he told me to tell you."

"All right. I'll call on him on my way home."

The gardener went away, and soon after Joe followed him. On reaching the lawyer's home he walked up to the front door. Henry Carter was sitting on the porch playing with his dog. He was surprised to see the boy he hated coming to the house. He couldn't imagine what business had brought him there.

"What do you want?" he asked in an ungracious tone.

"I want to see your father," replied Joe pleasantly.

"What do you want to see him about?" asked Henry with some curiosity.

"He sent for me."

"My father sent for you?"

"Yes," replied Joe, advancing and pulling the bell.

Henry was still more surprised. And he was exceedingly curious to learn why his father had sent for the blacksmith's assistant.

"Will you tell Mr. Carter that Joe Samson has come?" said Joe to the maid who answered the ring.

"Walk in please," said the girl, holding the door open, and then, in accordance with orders she had previously received, showing the visitor into the lawyer's library.

In a few minutes Mr. Carter appeared.

"You are Joe Samson, the blacksmith's helper?" said the lawyer.

"Yes, sir," answered Joe respectfully.

"You are a pretty strong lad, I understand."

"Yes, sir, I have good muscles."

"A sudden emergency has arisen at the bank. The night watchman has been taken ill, and his place must be filled at once until he is able to return to duty. While the chances are that nothing will happen at the bank, still it is necessary that no chances be taken, since it is the unexpected that often occurs, and must be provided against. Now I don't know of any one more suitable to fill the bill than yourself. I will pay you well to undertake the job, and I guess Rulofson can spare you for a week or two as a favor to me."

Joe was surprised at the offer, and he wasn't averse to accepting it if his employer had no objection.

"Well, sir, if Mr. Rulofson is willing for me to help you out I'll come; but you'll have to ask him before the matter can be definitely arranged."

"Very well. It is quite right that he should be.

consulted. I'll give you ten dollars a week during the time that your services are required. I suppose you are on your way home from work?"

"Yes, sir."

"Tell Rulofson to call and see me directly he is through supper."

"I will."

"That is all. If the matter is concluded I shall want you to report here as soon as Rulofson returns and let's you know that he has loaned you to the bank."

"All right, sir."

Mr. Carter let Joe out himself, and the boy hurried home, rather pleased at the prospect of holding down such a responsible position as night watchman at the village bank, even for a short time. He was ambitious to get ahead in the world, and he thought this opening might pave the way to something better than the job he was now holding. He liked Rulofson, and would have regretted parting from him, but still he had his future to consider, and he couldn't afford to let any opportunity to better himself get away from him.

"What's been keeping you, Joe?" asked Rulofson when the boy entered the cottage and found the blacksmith half through his evening meal.

Jennie hadn't sat down, as she was waiting for Joe. Her father had related to her how the boy had got the best of Haggerty's "terror" that afternoon, and her admiration for the sturdy lad had been much increased.

"Mr. Carter sent for me to call at his house," replied Joe, hanging up his hat and then taking his place at the table.

"Sent for you?" exclaimed the blacksmith in some surprise.

"Yes. I went to his house, and he told me that the night watchman at the bank has been taken sick, and he wants me to take his place until he is able to report for duty again. He offered me ten dollars a week. I told him I'd accept if you were willing, so he asked me to tell you to call on him right after supper."

Rulofson didn't look pleased at the prospect of losing the services of his stalwart young assistant, even temporarily.

"So you want to leave me, eh?" he said, looking hard at the boy.

"No; but I don't know of any easier way to earn ten dollars a week for a couple of weeks than to take up with Mr. Carter's offer."

"What's the matter with the night watchman?"

"Mr. Carter didn't tell me the nature of his illness."

"How comes it that Carter singled you out for the job?"

"Because I'm strong, I guess."

"Well, I don't see how I can spare you, Joe; but still, if you really want to take up with this thing I won't stand in your way. Ten dollars a week is more than you get from me, even taking into consideration your board and room, so you might as well have it as any one else. I'll get along somehow till you come back to me."

"It's kind of you, Rulofson, not to make a kick over the matter," said Joe. "I'll pay you whatever you think is right for my board while I'm working for the bank."

"No, you won't. You're perfectly welcome to stay here just the same as if you were working in

the shop. I wouldn't think of taking a cent from you. You're saving most of your wages as a nest-egg for the future, so you can add to it what you get from the bank. I'll go right over to Mr. Carter's house and tell him you have my permission to accept the job he offered you."

Thus speaking the blacksmith got up from the table, put on his hat and left the house.

"I suppose you'll be out all night when you go to the bank?" said Jennie.

"Very likely. I'll have to do my sleeping in the daytime, which will be something new for me," replied Joe.

"It will be much easier than working in the shop."

"Oh, I don't mind hard work. It agrees with me. Still I rather like the idea of watching the bank for a while."

"Well, don't run off with the safe, or the bank would surely fail," laughed the girl.

"I'll try to resist the temptation," chuckled Joe. "I've heard of a tramp stealing a hot stove on the stage, but I never knew of any one walking away with a steel safe on his back."

"To hear father brag about your strength one might easily believe you capable of lifting a bank safe," smiled Jennie. "Tell me how you managed to keep Mr. Haggerty's horse still while father shod him. He said the animal started at first to clean up the shop, but you got some kind of grip on him that took all the fight out of him."

Joe told her how he had brought the stallion under subjection, and soon after he had finished, and was helping Jennie wash the dishes, Rulofson returned and told the boy to report right away at the lawyer's house.

CHAPTER III.—The Bank Robbers.

When Joe reached Mr. Carter's house he ran across Henry in the hall. That young gentleman had learned from his father that the temporary vacancy of night watchman at the bank had been offered to Joe Samson, and that in all probability he would take up the duties of the position that night. Although the job was, in Henry's opinion, a plebeian one, he considered it too good for Joe, and with the view of queering him he threw out insinuations reflecting on his ability to make good. Mr. Carter, however, paid no attention to his son's suggestions, for he was satisfied in his own mind that Joe was the best person he could get on such short notice to watch the bank a night.

"So you're going to act as night watchman at the bank until Smith gets well?" said Henry to Joe.

"I believe so," replied the latter.

"Do you think you'd be able to stand a thief off if he tried to get in?" asked Henry with a sneer.

"I should try to do so at any rate," answered Joe.

"I don't think you're old enough to fill the bill properly," went on Henry. "It's a man's job."

"Oh, I guess I'll manage to pull through," said Joe cheerfully.

"I wouldn't be surprised if the bank was robbed while you are in charge," said Henry spitefully.

"I don't think such a thing is likely to happen," replied Joe pleasantly.

"Why isn't it? You must have a big opinion of your abilities."

"No attempt has been made to rob the bank since I've been in the village, so I don't see why such a thing should happen during the short time I expect to be in charge."

"That's because Smith knows his business. You're only a boy, and don't know anything about watching a bank. I suppose you think because you're so strong that nobody can do you up, but a bank robber would soon settle you with his pistol, and then, he'd blow the safe open and walk off with all the money."

"If you were the president you wouldn't hire me, then?" smiled Joe.

"I should say not. My father is foolish to take chances with you."

"Perhaps if you were to suggest to him that in your opinion I was not the proper person for the post of night watchman he might reconsider his offer," said Joe with just the least bit of sarcasm in his tones, for he knew well enough that it was personal spite that called forth Henry's remarks.

"It's none of my business to interfere," replied Henry. "The risk of taking you on is up to my governor."

At that moment Mr. Carter appeared at the library door with his hat on.

"We'll go to the bank now," he said, looking at Joe.

"I'm ready, sir," answered the boy promptly.

They were admitted by the day porter, who had gone home. Mr. Carter explained what Joe was expected to do, showing him a time-clock he had to ring up every fifteen minutes.

"Here is Smith's revolver. You must keep it in your pocket, so as to have it at hand in case of an emergency," said the lawyer, giving him the weapon. "After I go out you will bolt the door, and admit no one under any pretext until the porter appears in the morning to relieve you. Understand?"

"Yes, sir," answered Joe.

"You will no doubt need a lunch at midnight. You must bring it with you. I will send you something right away by my gardener, the man who carried my message to you at the shop. Take it in through the window in front. That's all. I will now bid you good-night."

The lawyer then departed, and Joe was left alone in the bank, somewhat impressed by the responsibilities that rested on him. It wanted a few minutes of eight, and when the hour was shown on the time-clock Joe rang up for the first time.

"I've got to do that every fifteen minutes until to-morrow morning at seven," he said to himself. "If I miss doing it even once the paper inside will show it. That clock keeps tabs on a chap to the queen's taste. It answers just as well as if a man walked in here every quarter of an hour to see that I was awake and tending to my duty. It certainly is a great scheme to keep a fellow right up to the mark."

Joe made a tour of the bank and then sat down in front of the time-clock. At quarter past eight he rang up again. A few minutes later the door bell of the bank rang. Joe went to the window and looked out. Mr. Carter's gardener stood outside with a can of coffee and a package of sandwiches, a piece of cake and a quarter of an apple pie. Joe took the food in through the window and

carried it to a counter in the back of the bank. The young blacksmith soon found that his night watch was a rather monotonous job. He had practically nothing to do but walk about occasionally, and at the end of each quarter of an hour ring up on the time-clock. Most of his time he spent in a chair facing the clock. So the hours passed slowly away, and midnight arrived. Not being used to night work, and having put in a hard day's work at the shop, Joe began to feel very drowsy. Of course it would never do to fall asleep. If he did, the chances were he'd sleep till morning, and the time-clock would give him away. At half-past twelve he thought of his lunch, and ate it. That brightened him up a bit, and for the next hour he did not feel sleepy, then the silence, the inaction, and the lonesomeness of his position, began to overpower him, and his eyelids began to feel heavy once more. He went to a basin and washed his face. That carried him over till two o'clock. Now he began to feel more sleepy than ever.

"Gee! I wish it was morning, so I could turn in," he muttered.

Ring up the quarter past, he started on another tour of the bank. The last place he went was the back door, which was locked and bolted like the front one, and as a further precaution, it was provided with an iron door on the outside, also locked and doubly bolted. To force an entrance through either door would take time and proper implements, and the watchman inside was sure to hear any attempt made on either. There were other and less troublesome ways of getting into the building by an expert, however, with which Joe was not as familiar as he ought to have been. In the hurry of placing him on guard, Mr. Carter had forgotten to tell him about the cellar door and window. It is true the former was of iron, locked, and further strengthened by two iron crossbars. It was not often used during the warmer months of the year, after the furnace which heated the building was out of commission.

The cellar window was barricaded with an iron shutter. Both door and window presented strong obstacles against surreptitious entrance on the part of a thief, but an expert crook, provided with suitable tools, would not have regarded them as barriers he could not overcome. Joe made his tour of the building once every hour.

He was seated in his chair, waiting for the clock to reach three, and pinching himself to keep awake, when he heard a slight noise behind him. He turned around and saw two men, with masks, close to him. Surprise held him inactive for a moment or two, and one of the men took instant advantage of the fact to swing a slungshot. The blow, though but a glancing one, landed with force enough to put him out of business. Lifting his unconscious form from the floor, the men bound him to the chair, and then, satisfied they had nothing more to fear from him, started operations on the big safe, which was not a very modern one, and looked easy to the two rascals. They worked away for an hour or more, like men who knew their business, then one of them applied a light to a fuse, and presently the door was blown off with a smothered shock. The contents of the safe, however, were not in sight, for there was yet an inner door to be opened. The crooks began work on this, and while they were so engaged Joe

recovered his senses. He looked around in a dazed way, not at first comprehending what had happened. His eyes rested on the face of the clock, and he saw that the hands indicated quarter past four.

"My gracious!" he exclaimed, recollecting that he had last rung up at quarter of three. "I must have been asleep for—— Hello! Why, I'm bound to the chair!"

Then he remembered the noise behind him, the two masked men, and the blow he had received from one of them.

"Great Scot!" he ejaculated. "My first night on the job, and the bank has been entered right under my nose! Lord! If those rascals have cleaned out the place, and made their escape with their plunder, my reputation in this village is gone for good. I wouldn't be able to stay here any longer than it would take me to pack my grip and get out."

At that moment Joe became aware of sounds going on in the direction of the safe, which was behind him.

"They're here still, and working at the safe. They have probably made good headway, and something must be done."

He worked himself and the chair slowly around until able to get a view of the safe. Then he saw that the big outer door had been blown off and that the men were engaged at the inner one.

"If I could free myself I'd make things interesting for those chaps, bet your life!" he muttered.

He proceeded at once to exert his strength on his bonds. They had tied him pretty securely, but bracing himself against a table he pulled so hard on the rope that it gave enough for him to draw out one of his hands. The other hand easily followed. He then took his jackknife out of his pocket and cut the rope away from his body, thus freeing himself entirely.

"There'll be something doing now, I guess," he said, drawing his revolver and cocking it.

At that moment the crooks succeeded in forcing open the inner door of the safe, and the working capital of the bank lay at their mercy.

"Get your grip, Jim," said one of them, "and we'll clean this safe out and be off. We ain't got no time to spare, as it's most daylight."

Jim started to get his grip, but started back with an exclamation of consternation. He found himself looking into the muzzle of the night watchman's revolver.

"Throw up your hands, both of you, or I'll drop you as quick as a wink!" said Joe in a resolute tone, with his finger on the trigger of his weapon.

The rascals were taken at a disadvantage, and they stood in front of the safe glaring at the plucky boy who had them dead to rights.

CHAPTER IV.—Joe Captures the Burglars.

"I say, young feller, can't we square this?" said one of the burglars.

"You mean that you want me to let you off, eh?" replied Joe.

"That's about the size of it," answered the man. "It won't do you no good to send us to jail. Jim and me have \$100 in our clothes. We'll give it to you if you let us go."

"You've got a nerve to try to bribe me with \$100. Look at the damage you've done to the safe. Will \$100 pay for that?" returned the boy.

"That ain't nothin' to you. Let the bank stand for that—it can afford to. You'll be a hundred cases in your pocket. You kin say that you caught us and frightened us off, see? You can't make \$100 any easier, and nobody'll know anythin' about it 'cept you and us."

"Not on your life, you rascal! I'm going to turn you over to the constable of the village,"

"You" regret it if you do."

"Will I? Don't you worry about that."

"We'll remember you, and get back at you if it takes years."

"If you get what's coming to you it will be a good while before you get the chance to make any more trouble. Come out of that now and back up against the wall yonder. Keep your hands away from your pockets, too, or you'll get hurt. I'm not going to let you draw a gun on me if I can help it. Hold your hands up, both of you!"

Joe looked like a boy who meant business, and as he had the law on his side the crooks recognized that he would be justified in shooting them in self-defense if they attempted to resist.

Reluctantly they raised their arms above their heads and backed up against the wall not far from the telephone apparatus, where a private wire connected with Mr. Carter's home. Keeping the two men under his eye and the revolver, Joe took down the receiver with his left hand. The moment he did so the telephone bell in the lawyer's chamber rang out. It awoke him at once, and he sprang out of bed. He knew that the signal came from the bank.

"Hello!" he said.

"Come to the bank at once," replied Joe. "I've caught two burglars. Bring Constable Greene with you."

The boy heard the banker utter an exclamation.

"Caught two burglars!" he exclaimed in a tone of astonishment.

"Yes, sir. I've got them under my revolver at this moment."

"They got into the bank, then?"

"Yes, sir."

"How?"

"I couldn't tell you, as I can't make an investigation as things stand. They came on me unawares and knocked me out."

"They did! Then how——"

"When I recovered I found myself tied to my chair in front of the time-clock. How long I'd been unconscious I couldn't tell you, but it must have been some time, for the men had blown the outside door of the safe open and were working on the inner one."

"The dickens!" ejaculated the lawyer.

"I managed to free myself from the chair, drew my revolver and tackled them just as they got at the money. I caught them at a disadvantage, and now I've got them lined up against the wall."

"My gracious!"

"When you reach the bank with the constable you must look for the place by which the burglars entered, for I can't take the chance of removing my attention from them long enough to open the door."

"I'll be over to the bank with Mr. Greene as soon as possible. Are you sure you can hold your prisoners till we come?"

"Don't you worry about that. I've got them dead."

"Good!" And then the lawyer said "Good-by and hung up the receiver.

Never for a moment while he was talking over the wire did Joe take his attention off the two crooks. He knew better than to give them the slightest chance to turn the tables on him. After he hung up the receiver he faced his prisoners. Satisfied that they could not bribe him they yielded to the inevitable and maintained a sulky silence. Time slipped by and early dawn gradually lightened up the sky in the east. The sun was due to rise about half-past four, and it appeared on time. Fully three-quarters of an hour elapsed before Joe heard any sounds in the neighborhood. Then he noticed footsteps at the back of the bank. Shortly afterward footfalls sounded on the basement stairs, and presently Mr. Carter, followed by Constable Greene and one of his deputies, appeared in the room.

"Where are you, Samson?" shouted the lawyer.

"Here, sir," Joe answered back.

Then the young blacksmith heard exclamations from the men as they came upon the dismantled safe. They lost no time, however, in coming around to where the boy was holding up the two burglars.

"Well, upon my word, you've got them, all right!" said the lawyer in a tone of great satisfaction, viewing the prisoners critically. "Take charge of them, Greene."

The constable and his deputy soon had the rascals handcuffed, and then Joe was asked to tell his story in detail. He showed the pieces of rope that had secured him to the chair.

"It was your strength that you got out of a tight fix," said Mr. Carter. "The fellows cut through the iron shutter in the cellar. It's a wonder you didn't hear them. When were you in the cellar before they came upon you?"

"About an hour previous."

"Did you examine the door and window then?"

"No, sir. I didn't know there were any. You did not mention anything about the cellar, and I had an idea it had no outlet. It was very dark down there, and my lantern didn't throw a very good light. I suppose I'm to blame for not being more particular, but this was my first night on duty here, and I was not acquainted with the building, never having been inside of it before."

"I have no fault to find with you. You captured the rascals, and that's the main thing," replied the lawyer.

"But they've done a good bit of damage to the safe, sir."

"That can't be helped. It's an old one, and should long ago have been replaced with a more modern one. The directors seemed to think it was good enough. I did not agree with their economical ideas. Now I hope this will be an object lesson that will convince them of the necessity of expending a sum sufficient to provide the bank with an up-to-date safe."

Mr. Carter thoroughly examined the interior of the safe and was satisfied nothing had been touched in it. He realized, however, that the in-

stitution had had a narrow escape, and that but for the young blacksmith's pluck the burglars would have made a good haul.

"I have no doubt that the directors will vote you a reward for saving the bank," said the lawyer to Joe.

"I don't expect any reward, sir. I have only done what I was hired for," replied the boy.

"That's true; but still you are entitled to some special consideration for capturing the rascals and saving the bank funds."

In the meantime the constable and his deputy had removed the burglars to the lock-up, a substantial brick building adjoining Mr. Greene's residence, and locked them up in separate cells.

Early risers had seen the procession, and learned something about the attempt to loot the bank. They spread the news, and by six o'clock there was a small crowd of curious villagers standing in front of the bank discussing the matter. Rulofson heard the news on his way to the shop, just before seven, and he was not a little astonished.

"Joe was certainly up against it from the start," he said. "But the burglar who gets away with him will be a lucky bird."

About that time the day porter appeared at the bank to relieve the new night watchman. He had already heard that there had been trouble at the bank, but was greatly astonished when he saw the real state of affairs. He found Mr. Carter standing guard over the safe. Joe was away with a message to the cashier that soon brought that gentleman on the scene. The boy didn't come back with him, but went home to breakfast. He had quite an exciting story to tell Jennie, and the girl listened to him in real astonishment.

"So you actually captured the two burglars, Joe?" she said.

"I certainly did. They're in the lock-up now."

"I don't see how you did it all by yourself," she said.

"I got the drop on them, and neither of them dared chance getting a bullet into his body by making a fight of it."

"You are certainly a remarkable boy. You are always doing something unusual that attracts attention."

"It isn't my fault. I didn't invite those burglars into the bank."

"Of course you didn't; but after they had captured you it is most remarkable that you were able to get the better of them. You have great pluck."

"I simply did my duty. I am hired to protect the bank at night, and I did the best I could to that end."

"I should think you did. Everybody in the village will be talking about you this morning. Really, you are getting to be quite famous."

"Village fame doesn't amount to a whole lot," laughed Joe.

"I think it does. It makes you a person of some consequence."

"I'm not hankering after the limelight."

"You ought to get a present from the bank for saving the money."

"I won't refuse anything that comes my way. Mr. Carter said that the directors would prob-

ably vote me a reward as an evidence of their appreciation."

"You deserve it."

His experience with the burglars had chased all his sleepiness away, and Joe didn't feel like turning in after he had had his breakfast, so he walked down to the shop, where he was hailed in a rousing way by Rulofson.

"Just to think of you running against a couple of burglars the very first night on your new job!" he said. "Tell me all the particulars."

Joe did so, and before he had concluded he had other listeners in the shop. All agreed that Joe had done a big thing in saving the bank, and they did not stint their commendation. It was ten o'clock when Joe returned to the cottage, and there he found one of the constable's deputies waiting for him.

His presence was required as a witness at the examination of the two burglars in the justice's office. Of course he had to go. There was a big crowd, the overflow of those who could not bet inside gathered in front of the office of the justice when Joe and the deputy arrived. The young blacksmith was enthusiastically received, for everybody knew him, and had heard of his feat of capturing the two crooks. On the strength of his testimony the men were held for trial and ordered removed to the country jail in the near-by town. Then Joe was allowed to go home and take his much-needed rest.

CHAPTER V.—Walking Into a Trap.

Henry Carter was not pleased to learn that the young blacksmith had distinguished himself on the very first night he stood watch at the bank. In his opinion Joe's success was just a fluke, and he so expressed himself when talking about the affair to his associates. As Joe was a whole lot more popular among the boys than the lawyer's son, what Henry said didn't count for much.

"Oh, you're jealous, Henry," remarked one lad, with a grin.

"Jealous!" cried Henry. "What! of Joe Samson?"

"Yes."

"What are you talking about?" replied Henry with a look of disgust. "What is that common blacksmith to me? You fellows make me tired the way you rave over him. Just as if he amounted to anything," he added with a sneer.

"He's a blamed good fellow, all right," said one of the boys sturdily.

"You bet he is!" acquiesced another.

"The finest chap in the village," chorused a third.

"I don't admire your taste," snorted Carter.

"No, you're sore on him because you're stuck on Jennie Rulofson, and she thinks more of him than she does of you," chuckled one of the boys.

"You're crazy," replied Henry. "Jennie isn't so much."

"You'd like to go with her, just the same," said another boy tantalizingly.

"Ho! I guess I could if I wanted to," said Carter loftily.

"You can't bluff us that way. We know that she has no use for you."

"I heard her say that you didn't know enough to go in when it rains," said one of the boys, grinning all over his face.

The boys geyed Carter so much that he finally walked off in a huff.

"He think 'cause his father is president of the bank, a lawyer and a politician, that he's the whole thing himself in the village," said one of the boys. "But he isn't by a long chalk. I don't care much for him."

And that was the sentiment of the rest, who went off talking about Joe and his latest feat. When the directors of the bank met they voted to buy a new up-to-date safe. They also voted, at Mr. Carter's suggestion, the sum of \$250 to Joe Samson for saving the bank from being looted. The lawyer handed him the money that evening, with the thanks of himself and the other directors, and Joe began to feel like a small capitalist, for he now was worth something over \$400.

He held his new job for three weeks, at the end of which time Watchman Smith was able to report for duty, and so Joe returned to the blacksmith shop. He didn't remain very long at the place, for things over which he had no control suddenly removed him from the village and landed him among more stirring scenes. He had been back with Rulofson about three weeks when he was summoned to attend the circuit court in the adjoining town to testify against the bank burglars. Mr. Carter and Constable Greene were also subpoenaed, but Joe was the principal witness against the men. They had communicated with their friends in New York and a lawyer had been provided to defend them.

The friends of the crooks, however, decided that it would be much to the advantage of the accused if the chief witness could be kept from testifying. So they got up a scheme, the object of which was to remove the young blacksmith to a distance—the further the better. An emissary of the plotters visited the village to get points. Among other things he learned that the boys of the village had formed a social club called the "Night Owls." All new members invited to join had to submit to a secret initiation, which took place at an old deserted mill on the county road near the freight siding of the D. & L. Railroad.

Quite a number of lads had been initiated, and in order to encourage more recruits to join they had declared that the ordeal was dead easy, and that they had a bang-up time. The emissary learned that Joe Samson had been invited to join the "Night Owls," that he had accepted, and had been informed that he would be duly notified of the night when he must appear alone at the old mill to be initiated. The friends of the captured bank burglars made up their minds to take advantage of the chance to entice Joe Samson to the old mill some night before the one selected by the "Night Owls" for putting him through the three degrees of the club. It was a lonesome spot after dark, and they figured that if they could get him there the rest of their plan could be easily carried out. Two nights before the trial was to come off Joe was finishing his supper when there came a knock at the cottage door. Jennie answered it, and found a strange boy standing outside.

"Is Joe Samson in?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Give him that note," said the boy, handing her an envelope, and then turning on his heel and walking away.

Jennie carried the envelope to Joe.

"A boy left that for you," she said.

"Who was he?" asked the young blacksmith, tearing open the envelope.

"I never saw him before," she replied.

Joe glanced over the enclosure, which ran as follows:

"Ancient Order of Night Owls Social Club.

"To Joe Samson, duly accepted applicant for membership, greeting:

"You are hereby required to appear this evening, at eight o'clock sharp, at the old mill down the road, to be initiated into the Three Degrees of Good Fellowship of the Ancient Order of Night Owls Social Club. Enough said.

"By order of the Master of Ceremonies."

Joe chuckled as he read it.

"What is it?" asked Jennie curiously.

"Read it for yourself," he replied, tossing her the note.

"So this is the night you're to be initiated?" she said, for Joe had already told her that he was going to join the club.

"Looks that way, doesn't it?"

"I suppose you'll have great fun. I wish I were a boy."

"I don't. I prefer to have you a girl."

"Do you really?" she asked roguishly.

"I do. If you were a boy you wouldn't be half as interesting to me."

"I didn't know that I interested you particularly," she replied demurely.

"Didn't you? Well, you know it now."

"You are jolly me, Joe."

"Not at all. I always say what I mean."

"Why should you be interested in me?"

"For several reasons, one of which is that you're the prettiest girl in the village."

"Aren't you complimentary?" blushed Jennie, pleased to death at the compliment.

"Another reason, and a more important one, is that you're the nicest and best girl I ever met."

"Now, Joe! You know you don't mean that."

"If I don't I'm handling the truth very carelessly then. Now that I've told you what I think of you you ought to be equally confidential and tell me what you think of me."

"Oh, I couldn't think of doing that," she cried with a vivid blush.

"Why not?"

"Girls never tell such things."

"Can't you make an exception in my case?"

"No," she said, shaking her head.

"That's funny. I heard you say what you thought of Henry Carter."

"Oh, I don't care the snap of my finger for Henry Carter! He's too ridiculous for anything!"

"Am I to understand that you care something for me, then?"

"Now, Joe, do stop your teasing!"

"But I want to know," he insisted, grabbing her around the waist.

"I shan't tell you anything," she cried, making a bluff to get away.

"If you don't tell me I'll do something desperate," laughed Joe.

"What will you do?"

"I'll—I'll kiss you!"

"Don't you dare try it!"

"I always accept a dare," he said, pulling her blushing face down and kissing her twice.

She gave a little scream, broke away from him and ran out into the kitchen.

"I wonder if she's mad?" thought the young blacksmith, looking at the clock, and noting that it was half-past seven.

But Jennie wasn't mad at all. Quite the reverse; for Joe's cheeky proceeding had made her feel very happy. To tell the truth, the girl was very much in love with her father's assistant. But she couldn't face Joe after that ordeal, for she was all in a flutter, so the boy put on his hat and went off toward the old mill, with his mind divided between pretty Jennie Rulofson and the expected initiation he was to undergo at the hands of the members of the "Ancient Order of Night Owls Social Club," little dreaming that in reality he was walking into a trap set for him by the friends of the two bank robbers.

CHAPTER VI.—Locked in a Freight Car.

The old mill toward which he was making his way was a deserted old ruin. Once upon a time, a long while since, it was a busy place, but that was before modern methods in the flouring industry had put small individual enterprises of the kind out of business. The four walls still held together, for they had been built to last, and a part of the original roof remained to resist the entrance of the snow and rain. The machinery had been taken away and sold for what it would bring, so that the mill was simply an empty shell that would be pulled down some day when the present owner of the property found use for the ground. As Joe approached the edifice he expected to be greeted by the assembled members of the "Night Owl" organization. He was surprised not to see any of them around. The mill was silent, and apparently deserted.

"Maybe they're hiding somewhere inside, and are counting on confusing me by a sudden rush," he thought. "Well, they won't take me by surprise, not if I know it."

Reaching the entrance of the building he paused and looked in. It was as dark as pitch, and there was not a sound.

"Maybe I've got here ahead of the bunch," he thought. "Still it's close on to eight o'clock, the hour appointed."

He stepped into the dark room. As his footfalls resounded on the bare planking a sepulchral voice suddenly exclaimed from beyond a door that led into an entry:

"Advance, applicant for membership in our ancient and social order of Night Owls! Advance without fear, and be initiated into the first degree."

The voice ceased, and was followed by a chorus of loud groans produced by the three men who were lying in wait for their victim. Joe chuckled as he strode forward toward the inner door. He was prepared to be roughly handled, and he

guessed he could stand it. He had no idea of putting up any resistance, as his strength would easily have enabled him to do. He didn't believe his boyish friends would go to any extremes, though it was possible they might treat him more strenuously than usual because of his strength. So he walked up to the door and then halted on the threshold. He peered through, but could see nothing.

"Pass on!" said the sepulchral voice.

Joe expected something to happen. Something did happen, but not what he was looking for. He received a terrible blow from a heavy fist on the jaw that stretched him half dazed on the floor. Before he recovered from the effects of it he was bound hand and foot and gagged, and hauled to one side. The perpetrators of the outrage then left him lying in the entry, as helpless as a pig trussed up for market. When Joe recovered the full use of his senses again he was a bit angry at the rough-house greeting he had received. The terrible clout on the jaw he had got he thought was carrying things a little too far.

"I wonder what they take me for—a punching bag?" he growled. "Don't they think I have any feeling? If this is a specimen of the first degree, I wonder how rough the second and third will be? I'll have to call them down. I wonder where they have gone to now, and what they're up to?"

While Joe was waiting for the rest of his initiation the three men who had captured him were standing outside in the gloom.

"He fell into the trap very neatly," chuckled the leader of the triumvirate. "He is now our meat, and all we have to do is to get him safely aboard that loaded freight car bound for Chicago, and the business is done."

"We are not yet sure there is any room in the car for him," said one of the other two.

"We'll make room if there isn't. We'll go over to the siding now and make our preparations. The agent has gone home and there's no one around. We can easily remove the seal so that it can be replaced, and with our instruments we can detach the padlock."

"How long do you suppose it will take the car to reach Chicago?"

"I couldn't tell you, but I guess it will get there inside of a week. We have provided a bagful of grub for him that should last him that time at least."

"By leaving one of his arms free, as we'll have to, he will probably be able to release himself after a while, and then he'll pound on the door to attract attention. If one of the train crew should hear him he'll be let out, and that might queer our plan. I think one of us ought to be locked in with him to keep him quiet, and make sure that he gets to Chicago."

"If you'd like to undertake the job, Fisher, you're welcome to. Johnson and me'll lock you in with him with all the pleasure in the world," chuckled the leader, whose name was Benson.

"You're blamed kind, I don't think. My idea is that we should draw lots to see which of us undertakes the job," replied Fisher.

The other two objected to taking any chances of being the boy's jailer in the freight car.

"Oh, well, if you don't care to do the thing fair

we'll call the matter off. I ain't goin' to be no goat for you two. If the boy gets out of the car and comes back to make things hot for Bill and Jim you can blame yourselves for it," said Fisher in a grouchy tone.

"He won't get out, I guess, till he's a long way from these diggings," said Benson. "There isn't any need of one of us going with him."

"All right. Have it your own way. I only offered the suggestion."

"Come on. We'll go down to the siding."

They started for the tracks of the D. & L. road, and a walk of five minutes brought them to the deserted siding, where half a dozen freight cars were drawn up, waiting to be attached to the night freight that was due to come that way between eleven and midnight. One of the cars was ticketed to Chicago, and this one had been picked out for sending Joe Samson away in. The leader of the trio took an instrument out of his pocket and speedily removed the car seal from the door. Another implement made short work of the padlock. The men then shoved back the car door and found that it was about two-thirds loaded with freight.

"There's lots of room for him in there," said Benson, glaring about in the darkness of the car. "I'll tell you what we'll do," he added, as if an idea had just struck him.

"What?" asked one of his companions.

"You see there's quite a space in the centre of the car," he replied, flashing a match and holding it forward.

"What about it?"

"We'll put him in there with his bag of grub and then barricade him in with these boxes. With only one hand at liberty he won't be able to push the boxes away to reach the door."

"Good idea," said Fisher.

Benson pushed the door to and they walked leisurely back to the mill. In the meantime Joe waited with growing impatience for the rest of the initiation to proceed.

"What in thunder are the chaps waiting for?" he growled, when ten minutes had elapsed. "Why don't they finish up? I'm getting tired of this. Enough is as good as a feast any time."

Nobody came, however, and Joe got tired of lying all bound in the dark, so he started to try and free himself. He soon discovered that too many loops of the rope had been bound around his arms for his strength to have any effect on them. It looked as if he had to stay tied until released. Finding that he couldn't do anything, he quit, and waited with the best grace he could. The three men remained away half an hour. Then Joe heard their footsteps in the outer room, and supposed the boys were coming back to go on with the performance. The leader of the three came to the door and flashed a match into the entry to see if the prisoner was where they had left him.

When the light flared up and disclosed the man's face and figure Joe was a bit surprised. He supposed it was a villager who had come to the mill for some purpose. He expected to be immediately released. The stranger, however, instead of aiding him, turned on his heel and walked away, and Joe heard the three fellows talking in low tones in the next room. Then for the first time a suspicion that something was wrong began

to dawn on his mind. As the moments passed away and the men continued their conversation outside, Joe felt more and more certain that they, not his boy friends, were at the bottom of his predicament. If so, what could be their object? As Joe wasn't a mind-reader, he couldn't guess.

An hour elapsed, and then the leader of the schemers said it was time for them to finish the job. Accordingly, the three men entered the entry, and Benson lighted a match to throw a little light on the proceedings. Without a word the other two grabbed Joe by the feet and shoulders and lifted him from the floor. The procession then left the mill and started for the railroad. Joe, as he was carried along, wondered where he was being taken, and what was the meaning of it all. At length they reached their destination and came up to the car. Benson had closed the door tight, but they now found it open about an inch.

"I'm sure I shut that car door," he said, looking around suspiciously.

"I guess you thought you did," replied one of the other two who had laid Joe down.

"I know I did, for I put the padlock back. Now here is the padlock hanging loose and the door open an inch or more."

"Well, take a look inside and see if any one is in there. It's not likely, though, unless some tramp has come this way and is thinking of stealing a ride."

The leader pulled the door open and jumped in.

Striking a match, he looked around the open space in the car, but there was no one there.

"It's all right," he said. "Whoever monkeyed with the padlock didn't get in the car to stay; and after I have fixed the lock again he won't be able to get in if he comes back with that intention."

The speaker ordered his companions to lift the prisoner into the car, which they did, and then he dragged Joe back into the corner. The bag of food which Benson had brought along was tossed in, and he put it down beside the boy.

"Now, young fellow, you're bound out West for the good of your health," he said to Joe. "You'll find grub enough to last you in that bag. I'm going to release your right arm so you can get at it when you're hungry. There's a couple of quart bottles of water, so you needn't go thirsty. You can take the gag from your mouth yourself. Sorry I ain't got time to explain why we're sending you on this journey, but it wouldn't do you any good to know."

The speaker then partly released Joe's arm so that a little effort on his part would finish the job, and then left him. He then proceeded to barricade the boy in with a row of heavy boxes as high as his shoulder, after which he rejoined his companions outside, closed the car door and replaced the padlock.

"He's safe enough now," he said in a tone of satisfaction. "He won't appear at the trial the day after tomorrow, and Bill and Jim'll get the benefit of his absence. I think we've worked this matter to the queen's taste."

The three men then walked away, and were soon lost in the gloom.

CHAPTER VII.—Danny, the Tough Waif.

Joe was paralyzed by the words of the leader of the plotters, which could not be called an explanation, but merely a hint of what was in perspective.

"I'd like to know what reason those men have for treating me this way," he muttered, making no effort to complete the loosening of his arm, so staggered was he by the situation. "They must have mistaken me for somebody else they hold a grudge against. And yet that can't be, for that note was clearly intended for me. Although I didn't get much of a look at those men, I'm satisfied I never met them before. Why should they have anything against me? I wonder if this is a put-up job of Henry Carter's? He's down on me in the worst way, mostly on Jennie's account. Surely he hasn't got the nerve to engineer such a trick. Yet he's got money to pay for having me carried away from the village, and he's mean enough to do most anything. Well, as far as I can make out, the affair is a great mystery. I'll give it up and see what I can do to help myself out of the scrape."

He started in to get his right arm free. This gave him no great trouble. With one arm free he laughed at the idea of his kidnapers supposing he could not free himself entirely.

"I could do it even without a knife, but my jackknife will help matters along," he said, putting his hand in his pocket.

Had the knife been in his left pocket he couldn't have reached it. In a couple of minutes he was entirely out of the ropes. He had no matches, and the car was as dark as pitch. He knew, however, that the man who had dragged him into the corner had walled him in with boxes of freight. Feeling his way around the enclosed spot where he was confined he located the barricade of fairly heavy boxes Benson had built up to keep him in. Bracing himself as well as he could, he gave the top box a shove. It slid out of place and fell on the floor of the car with a crash. A second box followed with like result. As he was about to shove a third box over he was startled by hearing a voice up in the air behind him exclaim:

"Hully gee! Wot's dis? Is de car loaded wit' dynamite?"

"Hello!" cried Joe. "Who are you, and where are you?"

"Dash me buttons, if dere ain't somebody in de car! Who are yer, cully?"

"I asked you the question first," replied Joe.

At that moment the night freight rumbled up the track and stopped. The locomotive and several cars were detached, went to the head of the siding where the switch was thrown open, and then backed down to the freight cars waiting to be attached to the long train. The section of the train that was backing down slammed into the standing cars in the customary reckless fashion of freight cars when making up, and the jolt not only knocked Joe backward off his feet, for he was not looking for a collision of the kind, but it dislodged the unknown stranger from his perch above, and he tumbled into the hole between the freight, landing heavily on top of the young blacksmith.

One of his boots hit Joe a crack on his head, and what with the shock of it all the boy from Blackheath village was put out of business for a time. The tough occupant of the car scrambled on his feet and then felt of Joe.

"Hully gee! If I didn't knock him silly fallin' on him! If I'd hit the floor instead of him I'd have busted me snoot or knocked me brains out. Dat's wot I call bein' lucky. He's a boy like meself, only bigger, an' I s'pose dat he crawled in here like meself to swipe a ride. I must see wot kind of lookin' chap he is."

The tough boy felt in his pocket for a match just as the locomotive started ahead, and as a consequence he tumbled backward, hitting his head a crack on the floor.

"Oh!" he ejaculated. "Dis here is travelin' under difficulties. Wot a knock I got dat time!"

He lighted a match and surveyed the young blacksmith.

"Bust me if he ain't quite a gent! Nary a rag about him. He don't look like de chaps wot beat deir way 'tween towns 'cause dey ain't got de price. He ought to have pickin's on him. But den when he comes to, if he finds I've been t'rough his clothes, he might lick me. He's big enough to do it. I reckon dat I won't take no chances."

Just then the forward section, with the cars from the siding, bumped into the rest of the train on the main track, and the tough lad fell all over himself again.

"Dey ain't doin' a t'ing to us in here. I'll be as sore as a bile after dis trip. I wonder wot's in dat bag?"

He struck another match, looked into the bag, and saw that it contained several packages of crackers, two loaves of bread and a paper of sliced cooked ham, together with two milk bottles full of water.

"Blow me if he ain't pervided himself wit' grub enough for a week. Wot luck! I'll help meself, and den git back to me perch before he gets on to me."

The tough boy helped himself to a good share of the food and took one of the bottles of water. Then he climbed up to his hiding place on top of the freight. By this time the train had started ahead for the next station, a run of twenty miles. At the rate it traveled it would take two hours to cover the distance. The tough lad made a good meal and put the surplus away for another time. Long before the train reached its next stopping point he was asleep. Joe continued to lie unconscious on the floor of the car. About three in the morning he recovered his senses and sat up. The train was gliding along at about twelve miles an hour.

"Lord, what a tumble I got! And then a big bundle of freight fell on top of me, and that's the last I remember. Now the car appears to be on the move, and I'm being carried off against my will. I must get out of this place and make my way back to the village. I wonder what time it is?"

There was no way by which he could find out the time, so he had to take it out in guessing.

"Now I remember there was somebody in the car with me. He must be lying on top of the freight. From the tone of his voice he appeared

to be some boy tramp who is beating his way on the railroad. He's somewhere back there. He's nothing to me, but still poor company is better than none till the train stops, when I'll give this car the shake."

Joe sang out to the person he judged was lying on top of the freight, but received no answer. The tough lad was sound asleep, and didn't hear him. He called a second time, and then gave it up.

"Maybe he's left the car," he thought.

Leaning his back against the freight, Joe thought over his unpleasant experience of the night, and tried once more to reason the cause of it out. Finally, the lateness of the hour, the lonesomeness of his situation, and the steady clickety-clack of the wheels underneath, conspired to make him drowsy, and in a little while he, too, was fast asleep. He woke with a start, to find the train still in motion; but a dim sort of twilight in the car told him that morning had dawned. He could see objects pretty clearly now, and his gaze first lighted on the barricade, half of which he had broken down. He got up and looked around. Then it was he encountered the eyes of the tough lad looking down at him.

"Hello, cull! How yer feelin'?" asked the stranger.

"How are you feeling yourself?"

"Wit' me fingers, when I touch anyt'in'," grinned the lad.

"What are you doing up there?"

"Takin' t'ings easy. Who are yer, anyway?"

"Who am I?"

"Dat's what I said."

"I'm a boy, like yourself, only I'm not a tramp, which you seem to be."

"I ain't no tramp. I'm a young gent wot's travelin' dis way because de station agent couldn't change one of me numerous t'ousand dollar bills. See?"

"What's your name?"

"Me name's Danny Mann, and I'm de son of Mister Mann, de president of de road. I didn't want to order out me private car jest to do a few miles, so I took dis freight car. See?"

"Yes, I see you're a kidder."

"Wot's your name, and where are yer goin'?"

"My name is Joe Samson, and I'm not going any further than I can help."

"Wot yer mean by dat?"

"I mean I'm going to leave this car at the first chance."

"Wot for?"

"Because I don't care to ride any further than is absolutely necessary."

"Is dat so? Wot did yer get aboard for, den?"

"Because I couldn't help myself."

"How is dat?" asked Danny Mann, with some interest.

"I was captured by three men, who bound and gagged me, and then brought me down to the railroad siding, where they dumped me into this car, expecting that I would be carried out West."

"Is dat a fact?" said the tough boy in a tone of astonishment. "Wot did dey treat yer dat way for?"

"I couldn't tell you. All I know about it is that it seems to have been a put-up job to get me away from the village."

"Wot village?"

"Blackheath."

"Date's where yer live, is it?"

"Yes."

"I t'ought yer didn't look as if yer was used to beatin' yer way on de railroad. Say, dat bag of grub don't b'long to youse, den?"

"What bag of grub?"

"Dere's a bag of bread an' meat an' crackers, an' a bottle of water, down in dat corner. If yer goin' to leavé de car yer better t'row it up to me. Den I'll be able to ride as far as de car goes, maybe."

"I remember, now; the men put that in for me to live on till the car reached its destination."

"Dat so? If yer ain't goin' to use it yer won't want it. I live on it fust rate."

"You can have it. Why don't you come down and stretch yourself?"

Danny Mann thought the suggestion a good one, so he descended from his perch.

"Where are you bound for, Danny?" continued Joe.

"Nowhere in pertic'lar. Jest changin' me stampin'-ground, dat's all."

"Haven't you any home?"

"Nix."

"Then you're a kind of waif?"

"Wot's dat?"

"Oh, a person that's out on the world, without any relatives or friends to look after him. That's what I was when I struck the village where I live."

"Yer don't say? Den youse haven't no folks, neider?"

"Not a relative in the world that I know of; but I've made a lot of good friends at the village."

"Wot do yer work at?"

"I'm learning the blacksmith business."

"Do yer like dat?"

"It's good enough till I can better myself."

"Den yer don't intend to be a blacksmith all de time?"

"I hope not."

"Wot would yer like to be—president of dis railroad?" grinned Danny.

"I wouldn't mind; or president of the village bank. By the way, I saved the bank from being robbed about six weeks ago."

"Is dat so? How did yer do it?" asked Danny in a tone of interest.

Joe told him the story of the affair.

"They're going to be tried tomorrow at Darien, that's the county seat, a good-sized town, about six miles from Blackheath. I've got to testify against them."

"I s'pose dat's one of de reasons why yer want to get back. Yer don't know de gazabos wot kidnaped yer aboard dis car?"

"No. I never saw them before. I'm certain they don't belong to the village."

"Maybe dey're friends of de crooks wot's goin' to be tried, an' dey want to git yer out'r de way," suggested the tough boy, unconsciously hitting the nail on the head.

"By George!" exclaimed Joe. "I wouldn't be surprised if you were right. I have been wondering who put this job up on me, as the only person down on me in the village is a boy who doesn't seem to have wit enough to work such a scheme."

"It looks dat way to me when yer say dat yer never seen de fellers before."

At that moment there sounded a long whistle from the locomotive, and the freight train began to slow down.

"The train is going to stop, so I'm off," said Joe. "Good-by, Danny. Glad to have met you. I wish you luck on your journey."

"Same to youse. Sorry yer ain't goin' 'long wit' me, for I'd like to have yer comp'ny."

Joe crawled over the remains of the barricade, walked to the door, through the chinks of which the daylight shone, and tried to open it by pushing it back. But it wouldn't budge. He exerted all his strength on it without avail.

"My gracious!" he exclaimed. "I'm locked in!"

CHAPTER VIII.—The Railroad Wreck.

"Wot's de matter?" asked Danny. "Can't yer get out?"

"No, I can't."

"Den dem roosters must have put de padlock on an' snapped it, an' we're bot' locked in fer fair."

"Well, I'm going to get out if I have to smash the door."

"I t'ink I see yer smashin' dat door," grinned Danny. "Yer couldn't do it no more dan yer could fly. I know wot dem doors is."

Unnoticed by the boys, the locomotive had been letting off a succession of shrieks that indicated something unusual in the wind. The train came to a rather abrupt stop, and as it did so another shrill whistle, apparently from another locomotive, sounded ahead, and as Joe started to pick up one of the boxes to launch it at the end of the door where the padlock was there came a tremendous shock. The string of cars smashed against one another, and many of them rose in the air, like horses vaulting a fence, while others keeled over on either side of the track.

The one in which Joe and Danny were confined was twisted around sideways and one side partly stove in. The boys were thrown upward against the roof while the freight fell around them in a heap. Fortunately, the heavy boxes slid under them, or they would have been subjects for a coroner's jury. As it was, they were so badly knocked around that neither remembered a thing for many hours afterward. Joe was the first to come to his senses. He found himself lying under and among a number of crates of light woodenware which was produced at a factory in Blackheath.

The scene of wreck and confusion around him was indescribable. Part of the roof of the car above his head was smashed open, and the sunshine poured down into the car. At first he was dazed and bewildered at the chaotic state of things but as his mind straightened out he realized that there had been a collision on the line, and that the freight train had apparently caught it hard. He was at first afraid to move, for fear of bringing a lot of the crates down on him; but figuring that he couldn't lie there indefinitely, he began to bestir himself with some caution.

"Where is Danny, poor chap?" Joe asked him-

self. "Is he lying crushed at the bottom of all this freight? From the looks of things I think I've had a mighty fortunate escape. I don't seem to have been hurt at all?"

Gradually he worked himself free of the crates till he got on his knees. Then he lifted himself and looked around to see if he could locate his companion. In a few minutes he saw Danny, in a hole formed by three arching crates. By lifting the top one he believed he could release the boy. It was no easy job to lift that crate. It had taken two men to place each of the crates in the car, though one man of average strength could move them around on their base.

Joe, however, as the reader knows, was much above the average man in general strength, and conscious of the fact, he tackled the top crate with the determination to force it aside so he could get at Danny and pull him out. At that juncture the tough boy came to his senses and realized that he was in a bad predicament. He had not been hurt beyond sustaining a number of bruises, but he could no more escape from his pen unassisted than he could fly. Glancing up, he caught sight of Joe looking down at him.

"Help me out," he said eagerly.

"That's what I'm going to do, Danny. How are you? Hurt any?"

"Dunno. I'm dat sore I feel like a bile all over," answered the youth. "Kin youse move dat big crate? I don't t'ink yer kin. It would take a mighty strong geezer to do it, I'm t'inkin'."

"Well, you watch me, Danny. I'm Samson, the Strong Boy," replied Joe with a laugh.

Bracing himself in the wreckage, Joe got a hold on the crate, and though it weighed over 550 pounds, he actually lifted it an inch or two from its resting place and shoved it a foot away.

"Gee! Dat can't be as heavy as I t'ought," said Danny. "If it wuz yer couldn't have done dat nohow."

"It's heavy enough, Danny, don't you worry. Now look out that something don't fall on you, for I'm going to shove it further over."

Once more Joe got a grip on the crate, lifted it and pushed it away. He judged that he had made an opening large enough to lift the tough boy out.

"Yer'll have to push it f'urder over, boss," said Danny. "I can't crawl out'r dere nohow. I ain't got no room to work meself in."

"Do you see that arm, Danny?" said Joe with a smile.

"Sure t'ing! Do yer t'ink I'm blind, cully?"

"Well, I'm going to haul you out with that."

"Yer only t'ink yer are."

Joe reached down, secured a hold on Danny's collar, and began to haul.

"Hully gee! Youse are pullin' me j'int's out'r place!" howled the boy.

"Are you stuck?" asked Joe, easing up.

"I reckon dat I am. Me foot is caught."

Danny tried, and finally succeeded in disengaging his foot.

"I've got it out," he said.

Then Joe got a fresh purchase, and hauled again. Up came the boy like a case of goods through the hatch of a vessel.

"There you are," said Joe, landing him on the edge of the hole.

"Dash me buttons! If yer ain't got more

muscle dan I t'ought. Youse is as strong as any two men. Who'd'r t'ought yer could do dat?"

"Now, Danny, I guess we can make our escape through that hole in the roof. At any rate you can, if I can't."

He gave the tough youth a boost, and Danny scrambled out into the open air.

"Hully gee!" he cried as he viewed the scene of the catastrophe. "Wot a smashup!"

Joe stuck his head out and took a look. Such a scene of devastation he had never seen before in his life. A passenger train, running as a special, had crashed into the freight owing to some error on the part of the train dispatcher, and dire results had followed. The locomotive of the special had climbed, tender and baggage car, on top of the locomotive and the first freight car, and then the bunch had gone over on the side. Part of the freight train was derailed and jumbled up, but only one passenger coach of the special, the smoker, had suffered to any great extent. The second coach had partly telescoped the smoker, while the four drawing-room cars, that had not been injured, had been hauled back to Jordan, a town a few miles back, by a locomotive sent to the scene of the accident. A wrecking train stood on the up track, and a large gang of men were at work clearing the tracks.

The accident had occurred three hours before, during which time Joe and Danny had remained unconscious in the freight car. Joe found that the hole wasn't large enough for him to get his broad shoulders through, so he exerted himself to widen it by tearing away a part of the jagged room. Danny tried to help him, but he couldn't do anything. Finally Joe got the hole wide enough, and clambered out on the car roof.

"We'd better get away from here, or the railroad men may think we're trying to steal something," said Joe.

They made their way to the ground without trouble and without attracting attention to themselves. Walking forward, they came to where several men were trying to lift a flat car, and it did not require the use of a derrick as matters stood. Still it was a little too much of a job for the gang.

"I'll give you a lift," volunteered Joe to the foreman.

"You!" laughed the man. "Why, you're only a boy, and are no use at all."

"That so?" replied Joe. "Let me show you whether I am or not."

He seized hold of the extreme end of the pole and shouted: "Now, then, all together once more!"

The men tugged, and so did Joe. The end of the truck rose a foot, and the foreman and a helper hastened to block it in that position.

"Upon my word, you are a corker!" said the foreman, with an accent on the "are," and a glance of admiration at the boy. "You have the strength of a young giant."

"You're satisfied now I can do something after all?" laughed the boy.

"Yes. I'll take back what I said. I'd like to hire you to help us out. I'll give you a couple of dollars."

"No," replied Joe. "I'm in a hurry to get on; but if you'll give me half a dollar I'll help you to get this car on the track."

"You shall have it."

Joe threw off his coat and got busy. In fifteen minutes the job was done, the money paid, and Joe and Danny on their way to the town ahead.

CHAPTER IX.—Joe Aids a Chicago Contractor.

The boys had a ten-mile walk before them to reach the town of Jordan. As it was nearly noon, and they were both quite hungry, not having had any breakfast, the prospect of such a long walk on empty stomachs was not particularly inviting.

"Maybe we'll strike some house where we can get a meal each for that half dollar I earned," said Joe.

"Gee! I hope so," replied Danny. "Me stomach is like a balloon—it's full of emptiness. I could eat most anyt'in' dat looks like grub."

After covering two miles they came to Jordan River, spanned by a trestle bridge. A track walker was standing at the end of the bridge, smoking.

"How far is it to Jordan?" asked Joe.

"About eight miles by rail, but it's only five miles by water," he replied.

"We were not thinking of swimming there," laughed Joe. "We are hoofing it."

"See that boat down there that's aground on the bank?"

"Yes," replied Joe.

"I was just talking to the chap that's aboard of her. He wanted me to help him get off the mud, but I couldn't leave the track. He's bound for Jordan. You look strong. Go down and offer to help him, on condition that he takes you two on to the town. That'll save you an eight-mile walk."

"I'll do it," said the young blacksmith. "Come on, Danny!"

They ran down to the edge of the water and hailed the young man on board the boat.

"I'll help get your boat afloat if you'll take us to Jordan," said Joe.

"That's a bargain," said the man, with alacrity.

He got into his skiff and pushed to the shore.

"We'll need a strong pole," said Joe.

"Where are we going to get it?" asked the boatman.

"If you've got a sharp hatchet I'll get it out of that wood yonder."

"I'll get you a hatchet," said the young man.

"Got anyt'in' to eat aboard, boss?" asked Danny.

"Yes. Are you hungry?"

"Am I? I should t'ink so! Neider of us has had anyt'in' to eat today."

"That so?" replied the young man, looking at Joe in some surprise.

"That's right," nodded the young blacksmith.

"Come aboard, and I'll give you some feed; then you can get the pole."

That suited Joe and Danny first rate. The boatman took them aboard his sailboat and into the small cabin, where he laid out a spread of cold meat, bread, marmalade, and a couple of bottles of ginger ale.

"Gee! Dis is fine!" said Danny, losing no time in getting away with a large share of the food.

The meal over, Joe took the hatchet, went to the wood with Danny, and in the course of

twenty minutes returned with a pile. Going aboard the boat, he pushed the pole into the mud and shoved away with all his strength. The boat began to move a little. After repeated efforts it slid off into deep water, and the boatman thanked Joe and complimented him on his strength. The sail up the river to Jordan then commenced.

"Dis is better'n footin' it," remarked Danny.

Joe and the boatman got quite friendly, and the young blacksmith explained to him the predicament he was in, and how he and Danny had almost lost their lives in the railroad accident.

"The line may be clear by the time we reach town," said the boatman, "and you'll be able to get a train back to Blackheath. Got money enough to pay for a ticket?"

"Half a dollar is the extent of my finances."

"That won't be enough to take you. Is the kid going with you?"

"I don't think so."

"Nope," said Danny. "I'm bound to Chicago."

"Well," said the boatman, "you've done me a good turn. I'll give you a couple of dollars, and that'll see you through easily enough."

"Thanks," replied Joe, "but that is more than our bargain."

"That's all right. I can afford to stand that much, as the job you did was worth it. Here, take it."

Joe accepted the two dollars and thanked the young man for it. It took them about an hour to reach the town, and there Joe and Danny took leave of the young boatman.

"I'm sorry dat youse ain't goin' wit' me, Joe," said Danny. "I've taken a likin' to youse."

"You expect to beat your way to Chicago on the freight trains?" asked Joe.

"Dat's de only way I kin do it," replied Danny.

"And when you get there what do you expect to do?"

"Dunno. Pick up a livin' somehow."

"How far have you come?"

"From Noo York."

"How long have you been on the way?"

"About a week."

"I'd like to go to Chicago or New York first rate, if I knew what I could get to do after getting here," said Joe.

"A feller wit' your muscle could easily git work."

"I dare say; but I'm not looking for a laborer's job. I want something better. I can get all the hard work I want at the shop in Blackheath."

At that moment an automobile came dashing down the street. A feeble old man was crossing the roadway at the time. The gentleman in the auto saw him and turned aside to avoid running him down. The wheels of the machine skidded, sending the auto against a lamppost. It turned completely over in an instant, burying the gentleman underneath.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Joe, dashing forward with Danny.

Before a crowd of any size had gathered Joe seized the corner of the auto with a firm grip and raised it a couple of feet.

"Try and pull him out, Danny," he said. "I'll try and hold it long enough."

Danny, assisted by a spectator, dragged the dazed man from under the machine, and then

Joe let it drop. The crowd gaped at Joe's exhibition of strength, which appeared more wonderful than it really was, though it was a mighty heavy lift, and took muscles of steel to hold the weight of that end of the machine while the man was being rescued. When the gentleman pulled himself together and learned the facts of his rescue he expressed his gratitude to Joe in no undecided way.

He pulled a \$100 bill out of his pocket and offered it to the young blacksmith, but Joe declined to accept it.

"Hully gee!" muttered Danny, looking on. "Wot a chump to turn down dat yellerback! Why, a hundred dollars is a fortin."

Joe, however, didn't care to accept money for performing a service that may have saved the gentleman's life. He considered that to be his duty, and the boy never looked for pay in doing that.

"Won't you accept it as a present?" said the gentleman.

"I'd rather not, sir."

"But you must let me do something for you. You have placed me under great obligations to you. Do you live in this town?"

"No, sir. I live in Blackheath."

"The name is not familiar to me. It's a small place, isn't it?"

"It's a large-sized village on the D. & L. road."

"How far from this town?"

"All of eighty miles, I guess."

"Are you visiting this town on business?"

"No, sir. I'm here quite by accident."

"I live in Chicago, and am here on business. Will you dine with me this evening at my hotel?"

"I was just going to the station to see if I could get a train for Blackheath."

"Is it necessary that you return home on an afternoon train?"

"No, sir, I don't think it is. I'd like to get back as soon as I can, though."

"You could wire your parents that you will return by an evening train."

"I have no parents, sir. They are dead. In fact, I have no relations at all. I am living with the man I work for—Mr. Rulofson."

"What business are you in?"

"The blacksmith business."

"Indeed! Does your ambition lie in that direction?"

"No, sir, I can't say that it does. I would prefer something with more of a future to it if I could get it."

"How would you like to learn to be a contractor?"

Joe had heard that there was lots of money in that business, so he said that it would suit him very well if he could find an opening where he could learn.

"You shall have an opening with me. I am a large contractor. My office is in Chicago. Here is my card. If you feel like accepting my offer, either write to me or come on to Chicago. You'd better dine with me and postpone your return for a few hours. We will talk the matter over while eating. It would give me a great deal of pleasure to take you into my office and shove you to the front."

"I am much obliged to you. I will accept your invitation to dinner, as I guess it won't make

any difference if I don't get back to the village till tonight. I can send a telegram to Mr. Rulofson letting him know where I am."

"Very well. I am stopping at the Jordan House. I will expect to see you between five and six o'clock."

Thus speaking, the gentleman, whose name was Edgerton, bade Joe good-by.

CHAPTER X.—Another Plot to Do Up Joe.

"I s'pose dis is where yer shake me?" said Danny, who had heard the conversation between Joe and the contractor, as they walked off together.

"Not at all," replied the young blacksmith. "I think you're going to do the shaking."

"Me! Nixy! I wouldn't shake yer if I could help meself."

"Then come back with me to Blackheath. I'll get you something to do there, and if I should decide to go to Chicago to learn the contracting business I'll take you with me."

"Do yer mean dat?"

"I do."

"Den I goes wit' yer, dat is if yer kin raise de price of me ticket, fer yer ain't got more'n enough dough to pay yer own fare."

"I forgot about that. I'll borrow \$5 from Mr. Edgerton, and that will pay both our fares, I guess. As I'm going to dine with the gentleman, you'll have to eat by yourself in a restaurant, and then join me later at the station. Here's half a dollar."

"T'anks. I'll fetch the change back wit' me."

"Don't worry about the change."

"Where yer goin' now?"

"To the station to find out what time I can get a local train this evening to Blackheath, and also the fare there."

The railroad station was not far away, and they soon reached it. On inquiry, Joe learned that the line had been cleared and that trains were running as usual. He found he could reach Blackheath by the 9:30 accommodation, and that the fare was \$2.40.

"Now we'll put in the time walking around town," said Joe when they left the station.

He knew that the blacksmith and Jennie were wondering what had become of him, but of course he couldn't afford a telegraphic explanation. When Rulofson got his telegram he'd know he was all right, and when he went home to supper he'd tell Jennie. The explanation of his sudden and apparently mysterious absence he'd give in person when he got back.

Joe, however, was fated not to get back to Blackheath that night. The news of the collision between the special and the freight train which had the car in line in which Joe was locked in, duly reached Darien, where the three rascals responsible for the abduction had gone to be present at the trial of Bill and Jim, the bank burglars, on the following day. They heard about the smashup, and wondered if the boy had been killed.

It was decided that one of their number should go on to Jordan and make inquiries. The errand fell to Fischer, and he took the first train through after the road was open. He was coming out

of the station on his arrival, when to his surprise, he saw Joe and Danny walking away from the ticket office.

"So the boy escaped, and I suppose he's just bought a return to Blackheath," he muttered. "If he gets back all our work will go for nothin'. I must try and prevent him from returnin'. The question is, how can I manage it?"

He followed the boys down the street and up the cross street into which they turned. He noticed that Joe seemed to be in no great rush to leave town.

"That's a pretty tough-lookin' kid he's picked up," thought Fisher. "They seem to be on good terms. What bothers me, though, is how I'm goin' to keep him from goin' back to Blackheath."

He turned the problem over and over in his mind, but without getting any nearer a solution.

"If Benson or Johnson was here we might manage it between us, but to do the trick alone is more than I can get around, I'm afraid."

He shadowed the boys wherever they went, and at five o'clock saw them part in front of the Jordan House. Joe entered the hotel, much to Fisher's surprise, while Danny walked off to connect with a good meal at a cheap restaurant a couple of blocks away.

"Can that boy have decided to stay in this town all night?" Fisher asked himself.

It was quite possible he had, but to make sure, Fisher entered the hotel, went to the desk, and examined the register. Joe Samson's name did not appear on the book. Looking around, he saw the boy seated in one of the chairs.

"He hasn't registered, yet he sits there as if he was a guest," thought the man somewhat puzzled. "If he only came to get his dinner he would have to register."

At that moment Mr. Edgerton, the contractor, came downstairs and went to the desk. The clerk said something to him and pointed Joe out. The contractor walked over, took the chair beside him, and entered into conversation with him, all of which was noted by Fisher. In about fifteen minutes Joe and the Chicago man entered the dining-room together.

"It seems he has met a friend here, and the chap is a pretty swell guy," said Fisher to himself. "They've gone in to dinner together. I'm afraid I won't be able to do anythin'."

He walked outside and stood on the sidewalk, wondering what he should do. Suddenly he felt a heavy slap on his shoulder and a voice exclaimed:

"Hello, Fisher! What lay has brought you to this town?"

He wheeled around, and recognized an old friend of his whom he had not seen since he'd been sent away for two years for a small job in New York.

"Why, Dooley, where did you spring from? When did you get out?" he asked, shaking hands with his old pal.

"Oh, I got out about three months ago. Are you workin' anythin'?" asked Mr. Dooley inquisitively.

"Not at present."

"Then how came you to float into Jordan?" Fisher explained.

"Now that you know the predicament I'm in can't you make a suggestion?" he concluded.

"You want to keep this boy from goin' back, is that it?"

"That's it," replied Fisher.

"Where is he now?"

"In the hotel, takin' dinner with some man he knows."

"Does he intend to go back tonight?"

"I believe he does, for I saw him talking to the ticket agent at the station about three hours ago. He was probably inquiring about a train for Blackheath."

"If he could be enticed up one of the side streets we might be able to knock him on the head," said Dooley.

"That wouldn't do much good. He'd recover, and return by a train tomorrow morning, and be in time to appear at the trial."

"If we could get him to the river, and aboard of a boat, we might be able to take him off somewhere and keep him until the trial was concluded," said Dooley.

"That would be a good plan. How can we do it without attracting attention?"

"Hire a cab and get him into it. Then drug him with a whiff of chloroform. After he was dead to the world we could see about gettin' a boat in which to take him off."

"It's easy enough to hire a cab, but gettin' him into it is another thing."

"Does the boy know you by sight?"

"I don't think so."

"He doesn't know me, at any rate. We'll go into the hotel, and when he comes out of the dining-room you point him out to me. Maybe I'll have a plan fixed by that time."

They went into the hotel and sat down. In the course of half an hour Joe and Mr. Edgerton came from the dining-room. Fisher pointed the young blacksmith out to his companion.

"The only train tonight that'll stop at all the way stations leaves the station at 9.30," said Dooley. "If he intends to take it he'll start for the station about nine. We must have a cab ready at the corner of the street this side of the station. I know a chap who will wink at a shady trick, if necessary. I'll go and make arrangements with him now while you stay here and shadow the boy. If I don't find you here when I get back, look for the cab at the corner of this street and Decatur. You'll see me standin' on the corner ready for business."

"All right," replied Fisher in a tone of satisfaction, believing that a solution of the case was at hand.

Dooley went away to hunt up his friend the cabman, while Fisher remained to keep watch on Joe's movements.

CHAPTER XI.—Kidnaped Again.

Joe had a long and confidential talk with Mr. Edgerton in the corridor of the hotel, and the contractor took a strong liking to the sturdy lad, who he felt was wasting his opportunities at the blacksmith business. He told Joe that he could do ever so much better by taking up with his offer without delay, and the boy saw that this was an exceptional chance to make an upward move in life that he could not afford to let get away from him.

The result of the interview was that he took up with Mr. Edgerton's offer then and there, and promised to report at his office at an early date. Joe had arranged with Danny to meet him near the station about nine o'clock, and Danny took up his stand on the corner of Decatur Street to wait for him to come along. A few minutes of nine Joe bade the contractor good-by, after borrowing \$5 from him with which to pay the tough lad's fare to Blackheath, and started for the station. Fisher, who had remained at the hotel and kept his eye on him, tagged after him, confident that Dooley had matters fixed in accordance with their arrangements. Joe walked down the street at a quick pace, his mind employed with thoughts of his future in the Chicago contracting business.

He had only one regret at cutting loose from Blackheath, and that was the unavoidable separation between himself and Jennie Rulofson, whom he had come to think a lot of. Still, he consoled himself with the thought that there was nothing to prevent them corresponding regularly, and he intended to revisit the village at no distant day. When he approached the corner of Decatur Street he saw a cab standing close to the curb, and he spied Danny on the opposite side of the way, talking to a boy of his own age with whom he had got acquainted. Danny was telling him about his experience in the railroad accident, and for the time being neglected to watch out for Joe. Joe was about to whistle to him when Dooley stepped up to him and asked him if his name was Joe Samson.

"Yes," replied the boy, surprised to be addressed by a perfect stranger in that town.

"There's a man named Rulofson in that cab who's been driving all over town for the last hour looking for you," said Dooley.

"Rulofson—here!" ejaculated Joe, much astonished.

"Yes. He wants to see you. Step up to the cab and talk to him."

Never suspecting the trap that was about to be sprung on him, Joe went up to the cab. At that moment Danny saw him, and started across to join him. Dooley opened the cab door and Joe looked in.

"There's no one here," he said.

Dooley gave him a shove, and Joe went sprawling half into the vehicle. Danny saw what was taking place and dashed forward to interfere.

"Hi! hi! Wot's de matter wit' youse?" he cried.

Fisher, however, who was close at hand, interfered, pushed the boy back into the street, and rushed forward to help Dooley. The two men didn't expect to have much trouble in getting Joe into the cab, but they reckoned without their host, as the saying is. Joe got on his feet, and grabbing Dooley, who was a good-sized fellow, swung the ex-convict off his legs, and shaking off his grip, flung him six feet away on to the sidewalk, where he landed like a bag of flour. Fisher then rushed at him, thinking to overpower him, but was surprised to find himself lifted in the same manner as Dooley had been and thrown against the corner building with a force that shook half the breath out of him. As Joe stood panting a bit from his exertions, ready to tackle Dooley again, the cabman reversed his whip and struck the young blacksmith on the head with the heavy

loaded end. Joe staggered and fell. Before he could recover from the effects of the cowardly blow Dooley sprang upon him. Danny came rushing up now, and piled on to Dooley, punching him in the face.

"Leave him go, or I'll knock de stuffin' out'r yer!" roared the tough boy.

The cabman, seeing how things were going, reached down and gave Danny a clip with the handle of his whip which almost put the lad out of business. It caused him to release Dooley, and the ex-convict immediately began shoving the young blacksmith into the vehicle. Fisher recovered in time to help him, and Joe was got inside.

"Get up with the driver, Fisher," said Dooley. "I'll attend to our chap."

Danny, wiping the blood from his face, uttered a howl of rage and dashed after the cab, catching on to the springs behind and holding on like grim death. His move was not detected, and the cab dashed off down toward the water-front. After going a block or two the vehicle proceeded at a much reduced speed, and presently came in sight of the river. The cabman drove to a certain deserted boathouse, at the wharf of which a small sailboat was moored. Danny, crouching under the vehicle, saw Dooley and Fisher take Joe, now unconscious, out of the cab and carry him on board the boat. Dooley took an instrument out of his pocket and speedily wrenched off the padlock that secured the sliding door of the cabin. The door was then pushed back and the men carried Joe inside. Fisher returned to the place where the cab stood and handed the driver a \$20 bill. The jehu thanked him, wished him luck, and drove off, Danny sneaking behind a corner of the boathouse and escaping notice. Fisher went aboard the sailboat, and then he and Dooley unmoored from the landing and the little craft drifted out into the river. Danny watched them hoist the mainsail and the jib and head up the stream, in the gloom of which they soon disappeared.

"Wot an outrage dat is! Dis is de second time Joe has been kidnaped! Dem fellers must be the same wot done it before. Maybe dey heard about de smashup on de railroad, an' came on to see wot happened to him in de car. When dey found he had got off wit'out any trouble dey nosed around till dey found somebody dat seen him an' me makin' fer dis town, so dey came on to try an' catch him ag'in, which dey done," argued Danny as he stood and looked after the receding boat.

His deductions were partly right and partly wrong, as the reader knows, but he was satisfied in his own mind that he had hit the nail on the head.

"Now wot's to be done? How am I goin' to help him out of dis hole? I'd foller dat boat if I could, but how kin I? De only way dat I see is to walk up de river. Dere ain't much wind, so maybe I kin catch up wit' it. Den I could watch where dey landed. But if dey landed on de udder side of de river me walk wouldn't amount to nothin'. Seein' dat I ain't got no place to go, anyway, I reckon dat I better foller de boat an' see wot happens."

Thus speaking, Danny started up the water-front of the town, and when he reached the coun-

try he kept sturdily on by the side of the bank, determined to rescue Joe from his abductors if he could.

CHAPTER XII.—Danny Outwits Fisher.

Joe had been drugged with chloroform in the cab by Dooley, and he didn't recover his senses till the sun had risen next morning. Then he found himself in the cabin of the boat, which was still sailing up the river at a moderate rate of speed under a light breeze. He was lying on a locker with his arms tightly bound. The two rascals had had an object lesson of his strength and were not taking any chances with him. The sun was shining through the open doorway, and he caught sight of his kidnapers seated in the cockpit. Dooley, who appeared to have some knowledge of boats, was steering. Joe, as he surveyed them, did not recognize either of them.

He had never seen Dooley before, and as for Fisher, he had had but slight chance to catch a view of his face the night he was abducted from the mill. It did not strike him that these men might be two of the three who had done him up on that occasion. Had the idea occurred to him he would naturally have wondered how they came to track him to Jordan. As the case stood, he could only consider that he was running in pretty hard luck, and he wondered what object these chaps had in carrying him off. At length Fisher got up and looked into the cabin. Seeing that their prisoner had recovered his senses he stepped inside.

"Well, young feller," he said, "you see you're up against it."

"I see I am," replied Joe. "Perhaps you'll tell me what your game is?"

"That's what I'm gein' to do. If we can come to an understandin' you'll be set free."

"What do you mean by an understanding?" asked Joe.

"Suppose you give your word to do a certain thing, can I depend on your keepin' it?"

"Yes, if I give it."

"Very good. If we set you ashore at Delhi when we come to it will you promise not to go back to Blackheath nor go anywhere near Darien?"

"Why should I promise that?"

"Because we don't want you to testify against Bill Thompson and Jim Parker, who go on trial today for that there bank business in Blackheath. Now you know what I'm gettin' at."

"I see," replied Joe. "I suppose you are two of the three men who captured me at the mill and put me aboard the freight car, where I nearly lost my life in the collision?"

"I am one of the men, but my friend outside had nothing to do with that matter. When we heard about the accident I came on to Jordan to find out if you had been hurt, for the injured were taken to that town. I saw you and a tough-looking kid at the station, so I knew you had escaped from the wreck unharmed. Seeing you at the station, I figured that you were gettin' a ticket to take you back to Blackheath. As that would have queered our plans, I set about preventin' you from gettin' back. I've succeeded, and now it's up to you to say what we shall do with you. If you'll agree to keep away from

Blackheath and Darien for a month or two we'll let you go, and I'll give you \$50 to make things easy with you till you get a job somewhere between this and Chicago. You'd better take me up. It wouldn't put any money in your pocket to help send Bill and Jim to State prison. You stopped 'em gettin' away with the funds of the bank. There ain't no call for you doin' anythin' more in the matter."

"Suppose I refuse to make any bargain with you what'll you do?" asked Joe.

"Why, we'll have to keep you away by holdin' you a prisoner till we see how things go with Bill and Jim. If the trial is postponed till the police can make a hunt for you, we'll carry you off into Canada and keep you there. We're bound to see that you don't show up at the court, and I can get money enough to put any plan through that will save our pals."

"Then you'd better get it, for I won't make any bargain with you," replied Joe in a firm tone.

"You're foolish. You'll be kept away in any case. It would be much better for you to stay away of your own accord."

"I never could show my face in Blackheath again if I did that."

"Why couldn't you?"

"Because I'd be ashamed to, for one thing."

"That's all rot. No one would know that you stayed away. You could say that you were carried off, as you were, and held a prisoner until released."

"That would be only partly true, and I'm not in the habit of lying."

"You don't want to be so particular."

"Well, I am particular in that respect. I refuse to agree to your plan."

Fisher looked disappointed.

"I'll leave you to think it over. Maybe you'll change your mind when you look at it in the right light."

"No, I won't change my mind. It's up to you to keep me away if you think you can. It's my opinion you'll have a good job on your hands."

Fisher saw that further argument was useless, so he said no more, but went outside to consult with Dooley. The latter had been opposed to making any deal with Joe, as he had no confidence in the boy's word. The lad's refusal to make terms rather surprised him, for he thought the young blacksmith would agree to anything to secure his freedom. As the men talked the matter over they did not notice a small youth keeping pace with the boat on one of the banks. This was Danny, who had trudged pluckily up the river all night, and had caught sight of the boat at early dawn. He wasn't any the worse for the tramp, though he was tired and sleepy by this time.

He had stuck resolutely to the work because he was determined to save Joe if he could. Danny never deserted a friend, and he had taken a great fancy to the young blacksmith. He was ready to follow the boat till he dropped in his tracks. Danny might be a waif from the slums of a great city, but for all that he had his good traits. His meeting with Joe was the most fortunate incident in his life, though he did not know it. Joe was just the person who could wield a powerful influence for good over the tough boy, for Danny was ready to do anything that the young blacksmith proposed. Danny rec-

ognized Joe as a kind of kindred spirit, notwithstanding that their stations in life were so widely different.

"Now dat it's daylight, if de wind don't git no stronger, dat boat won't git away from me," said Danny to himself as he trudged along. "Dem blokes don't t'ink I'm a-follerin' dem, an' de fust t'ing dey know I'll put de kibosh on dem. Dey'll have to land some time to git sometin' to eat, an' dat'll be me chance."

Morning grew apace and still the boat kept on, but the wind became much lighter, and consequently the progress of the craft grew slower, much to Danny's satisfaction. At length the houses began to grow more frequent, and finally a turn in the stream brought into view a large town ahead. This was Delhi, a big manufacturing place. There were wharves jutting into the river, and many sloops and small schooners tied up alongside of them. It was about seven o'clock now, and the smoke was beginning to issue from the factory chimneys. In a very short time the town would be full of life and bustle.

"Gee. Dere's a town ahead," said Danny. "I'll bet dey'll put in dere. I'ts lucky dat de town is on dis side of de river. If it wuz on de udder side I'd have to get across somehow."

As soon as Fisher and his companion saw the town ahead the former closed the sliding cabin door, but he couldn't lock it, as Dooley had wrenched the padlock off. However, that didn't matter much, since their prisoner was securely tied so that it wasn't possible for him to make a break for freedom.

"We'll put in here," said Dooley, "and get something to eat."

"We'd better land this side of the town, where we're not likely to attract attention," said Fisher. "I'll remain aboard and keep watch while you can hunt up a store and buy what you think will serve us for a couple of days. Here's a \$10 bill."

Dooley put the money in his pocket and headed for the river bank on the outskirts of the town. Reaching the shore, he tied the mooring line to a big stone, and after a few words with Fisher started off on his errand. Danny wasn't far away when this occurred, and the tough boy began to consider how he could make a successful attack on Fisher. He had picked up a stout stick along his route, but the question was to reach the man and catch him unawares. This didn't seem to be possible, as Fisher was wide awake and kept his eyes on the shore. Finally Danny decided to bombard him with stones from the bank and see what the effect would be. He picked up several good-sized ones and launched one of them at the man's back. It struck Fisher between the shoulders, and he sprang up with an imprecation and looked around. He saw Danny in the act of hurling the second.

"Hi! What in thunder are you up to?" he asked angrily.

Danny's reply was to fire a stone at his head. He dodged the missile and threatened the tough boy.

"If I come after you I'll make it hot for you!" he said.

"Aw, shut up!" replied Danny, throwing his third stone, which caught Fisher on his arm as he raised it to save his head.

The blow hurt him, and he lost his temper in earnest. He pulled the boat up to the bank,

jumped ashore, and started after the boy. Danny led him a chase of about thirty yards and then began dodging around. Fisher had to avoid two or three more missiles, and that made him madder yet. Danny kept getting him further away from the river, and at the same time edged toward it himself. Suddenly he threw his last stone straight at Fisher's head and then darted for the boat as fast as he could go. The man dodged the stone and came after him full tilt, feeling sure of catching him now. Reaching the rock around which the mooring rope was tied, Danny pulled the loop off of it, dashed into the water and scrambled on board. Fisher uttered a shout of rage at this unexpected move on the boy's part, and tried to reach the boat before it floated out of his reach. He was not successful. The only way he could get to the craft was to plunge into the water and wade or swim out, and this he hesitated doing.

"Come back here with that boat!" he roared.

"Aw, cork up!" retorted the tough boy, squatting down on the roof of the cabin and grinning at him.

The boat floated further and further from the bank, which made Fisher wild. He did not even then suspect Danny's real purpose in getting aboard the sailboat, but supposed he did it merely to make his escape. When the boat had got thirty feet away, and Danny judged that he was perfectly safe from Fisher's wrath, he jumped down into the cockpit and opened the door of the cabin. Looking in, he saw Joe lying bound on the locker. Then he stepped inside and showed himself to the astonished young blacksmith.

CHAPTER XIII.—Back to Blackheath.

"Why, Danny!" cried Joe. "Is that you?"

"Betcher life it's me!"

"Well, I'm mighty glad to see you. Put your hand in my pocket and you'll find my jackknife. You can cut me free with it."

Danny had the knife out in short order, and he lost no time in cutting the half-dozen coils the men had wound around Joe's arms and body.

"How did you know I was aboard this boat?" asked Joe, who supposed the little craft was somewhere near Jordan.

"I seen dem guys put yer aboard," replied the tough boy.

"Then you followed the cab into which I was dragged?"

"I caught on behind an' went erlong wit' it."

"That was clever on your part."

"De cab went down to a boathouse on de river, an' dem guys carried yer aboard an' put yer in de cabin. After payin' de cabby dey h'isted de sail an' started up de river. I follered, an' have been walkin' all night tryin' to catch up an' save yer."

"Walking all night?"

"Yep; an' I'm most done up."

"How far up the river are we?"

"Dunno, but I reckon it's some ways. Dere's a big town close by."

"What town is it?" asked Joe, shaking off the severed rope.

"I couldn't tell yer, 'cause I don't know."

"Well, you're a brick, Danny. You've got me out of a bad fix"

"I guess dat's right, boss. I wouldn't go back on you nohow."

"I shan't forget what you've done, Danny," said Joe, walking out into the cockpit.

He was astonished to find the boat in the middle of the river, floating down with the tide.

"I thought we were tied up to the bank?" he said.

"De boat wuz tied to a rock till I set her loose."

"But tell me how you managed to get aboard, and what has become of the two men?"

Danny began his story at the point where the boat had been hauled up to the bank and Dooley went off to get provisions. He told how he had pelted Fisher with stones till he got mad and jumped ashore to try and catch him. Then he explained how he had enticed the man some little distance from the boat, doubled on him, and gained the boat ahead of him in time to cast off the rope and jump aboard. Joe was quite tickled to learn how cutely Danny had tricked Fisher. The tough lad then went back to the point where he had started to walk up the river after the boat, hoping to keep track of her and find some way of saving the young blacksmith. Joe was astonished at the dogged perseverance of his new friend, and was very grateful to him for the loyalty he showed to him.

"You'll never regret sticking to me, Danny. You shall go to Chicago with me, and I'll see that you get a start in life there, too. You shall room with me, and learn to amount to something in the world," said Joe earnestly.

"Dat'll soot me all right. Whatever you say goes wit' me."

"Now, Danny, we must get back to Jordan and catch a train for Blackheath. I don't know much about sailing a boat, but as there isn't much wind I guess we'll manage to get on somehow. Come, now, help me hoist the sail."

They raised the mainsail between them and made the sheet fast. Joe took charge of the helm, and after experimenting a little finally got the hang of the job. It took them all day to get back to Jordan, and Danny put in most of his time sleeping. They made one stop at a small village to get their dinner and breakfast combined. They reached the wharf in Jordan from which the boat had been stolen about sundown, and turned the craft over to her owner, with an explanation, which the man accepted at first with some suspicion. Then they went to a restaurant and had supper. Joe found he could save time by taking the 7.20 express to Darien, which was a few miles beyond Blackheath, where they would arrive at 9.30, and then take a local train back at 10 which stopped at the village at 10.15. He adopted that plan, and they reached Blackheath on schedule time.

"You shall stop with me where I live, Danny, until I have made my preparations to go to Chicago," said Joe, as they left the station.

"All right, boss. If youse is willin' I am," replied the tough boy.

It was twenty minutes of eleven, and the Rulofsons had not yet retired for the night, when Joe banged for admittance on the cottage door. Rulofson himself answered the knock.

"Why, hello, Joe! So you've got back at last!

What in thunder carried you off to Jordan in such an odd way, and why didn't you come back last night as you telegraphed me you were going to?"

"It's quite a yarn, Rulofson, and it will rather astonish you when I tell you about my experience. Now let me introduce a new friend I've picked up. This is Danny Mann, who hasn't any home, and with your permission I want to have him room with me while I stay here."

At that point Jennie came running up to greet Joe. She had been greatly worried, as well as puzzled, over his mysterious disappearance, until her father received his telegram from Jordan. She had reported to her father that Joe had gone to the old mill to be initiated into the "Night Owls Club," and when he failed to come back at all that night she didn't know what to make of it. Rulofson suggested that he had probably gone to spend the night at the home of one of the members of the society. Next morning, when Joe failed to turn up at the shop, the blacksmith thought it very strange.

One of the village boys came into the shop, and Rulofson asked him about the initiation of Joe into the club, and then he learned that no such thing had taken place. He shut up the shop for a while and started to make inquiries about his assistant, but nobody had seen or heard of Joe since the day before. He induced several of the boys to go out to the mill to see if anything had happened to Joe there, but they returned and reported that they could find no evidence that the young blacksmith had been at the mill at all. When he reported the facts to Jennie on his return from the shop that night she became much concerned about the boy she learned to think a great deal of. While they were discussing his singular disappearance his telegram was brought by the village operator on his way home. That relieved their minds about him, but did not clear up the mystery.

They waited up till one o'clock for him to come by the train which reached Blackheath at midnight, and were surprised that he failed to appear. When he failed to show up next day Rulofson figured that he had gone on to Darien, where he was to testify at the Circuit Court that day. About one o'clock, however, a court officer came to the village to find out why he hadn't appeared at the court house as he had been directed to. Rulofson told him about the boy's unexplained absence from the village. The officer thought it was rather suspicious, and went back to report the matter to the judge. That's how things stood when Joe finally did turn up as we have shown.

The story he told certainly did astonish both Rulofson and his daughter. It fully explained the cause of his disappearance and subsequent absence. Jennie shuddered at his recital of his and Danny's narrow escape from a terrible death in the collision on the railroad. Joe told of the service he had rendered the Chicago contractor on his arrival at Jordan, but held back for the time being his resolution to go to Chicago, after attending the trial of the burglars, and learn the contracting business. It was long after midnight when they all retired that night, but Jennie was perhaps the happiest of all because Joe was back safe and sound.

CHAPTER XIV.—In Chicago.

Joe made his appearance in Darien next morning and reported to the judge of the court, with an explanation of why he was unable to show up the day previous. His excuse was accepted, and the trial of the bank burglars, which had been adjourned until that morning, went on. Bill Thompson and Jim Parker had been told that the principal witness against them would not appear to testify, and they had some hopes of getting off easy; but when they were brought into court that morning and found Joe present they saw that their goose was cooked. The jury lost little time in bringing in a verdict of guilty, and they got ten years each in the State prison. On his return from the trial Joe told Rulofson that he had accepted an offer to go to Chicago to learn the contracting business.

"That so, Joe?" replied the blacksmith, looking glum, for he didn't like to lose his stalwart young assistant.

"Yes. I've got to consider my future, and the blacksmith business doesn't strike me as just the thing to make a life occupation. There is lots of money in contracting if you know how to bid right, and then are smart enough to get the most you can out of the men you employ, and have capital enough to purchase at rock-bottom prices," said Joe.

"I dare say," replied Rulofson. "Who put the idea into your head?"

"The gentleman I saved from the overturned automobile in Jordan. He is a big Chicago contractor, and to show his appreciation of the service I rendered him he has offered to give me an opening in his business and push me forward."

"I'm sorry to lose you, Joe, but as long as the change is for your interest of course I have no objection to offer against it. Jennie will be sorry, too, to have you leave the village."

Jennie was not only sorry but quite broke up when she learned that Joe had definitely decided to leave the village and go so far away as Chicago. Joe assured her, however, that he wouldn't forget her.

"I'll write to you once a week, and you must answer my letters soon after you get them," he said to her. "Then we'll keep in touch. I'll let you know how I am getting on, and you can keep me posted about all that happens in the village."

Of course she promised to write as often as she could, and she also promised not to take up with any of the other lads of the place, as Joe said he didn't intend to have any other girl but her. She believed him, and the thought cheered her up. When the news got around that Joe was about to shake the village for Chicago the boys generally were sorry to hear it. The young blacksmith had made himself very popular with his associates, and every one of them, with the exception of Henry Carter, who was delighted to learn that Joe was going away for good, expressed his regret. At length the time came for Joe and Danny to take the train for the West. Joe carried a draft on a Chicago bank for the \$425 that he had had on interest at the village bank, and that was the cash capital on which he was beginning his new career.

Jennie parted with him tearfully at the cottage, permitting him to kiss her half a dozen times without objection, and then, accompanied by Rulofson and a delegation of the village boys, he went to the station with Danny, where he took a local train for Darien, at which town he was to connect with the Western express. Within twenty-four hours he and Danny reached the Windy City, and were met by one of Mr. Edgerton's employees, who had secured lodgings for them not very far from the contractor's office. Joe had arranged with Mr. Edgerton by letter for a job in the yard for Danny, and so the youth was provided for at the very start. Mr. Edgerton was putting up a new hotel of some size on the lake front, and Joe was made timekeeper on the job.

The building was finished in the course of three months and then Joe was transferred to the office. By that time he and Danny had got pretty well acquainted with Chicago. The tough kid was quite proud of himself, for he was no longer half ragged and disreputable in looks, and he was now able to jingle a little silver coin in his pocket. The days when he lived a hand-to-mouth existence, most of the time going short on food, were over. Joe was getting on fine himself, but when he was advanced over the head of a young man who had been in the office a couple of years his success gave rise to a good bit of jealousy and some resentment. It soon got around that he had a pull with the boss, and that rumor made him still more unpopular in the office. Of course he couldn't help noticing that he was treated rather coldly by his fellow clerks, and he could not quite understand it until Danny, who heard some of the men talking about Joe, put him wise to the real reason.

"I can't help it, Danny," said Joe. "Mr. Edgerton knows his business. He would not push me ahead unless he thought I was able to make good. I am trying hard to master all the details of the business, and am directing my energies entirely along the lines advised by Mr. Edgerton himself. He told me that it is his purpose to make me general manager one of these days, and with that idea in view he is developing my abilities toward that end."

"Dat's right," said Danny. "Wot do yer care for dem geezers in de office? If dey ain't got it in dem to get ahead demselves it ain't yer fault. Dey're jealous of yer, dat's wot's de matter wit' dem."

Joe pretended not to notice the coolness with which he was treated by his office mates, and he treated them in the most friendly way, hoping to ultimately overcome their antipathy. The disgruntled ones, however, were not disposed to be placated. They talked among themselves about Joe, and finally one of the bookkeepers, a dudish chap, who prided himself on being something of an athlete because he was able to do a few stunts at a private gymnasium he attended regularly, suggested that they unite in an effort to get Joe out of the business. The others eagerly grasped at the idea, and several consultations were held to consider plans toward that end. All kinds of mean tricks were proposed, but none of them was adopted, as they did not promise the success desired, and the conspirators knew that if they were detected at any crooked game they'd

have a hot time making explanations to Mr. Edgerton.

At length the dude clerk, whose name was Clarence Coyne, conceived the idea of making life miserable for Joe. He proposed that as a beginning they should invite the budding young contractor to join a fictitious secret order of which they were to allege they were all members, and put him through such a course of sprouts as would send him to a hospital for a while. This plan was agreed upon, and Clarence Coyne undertook the job of enticing Joe into the trap. Had the crowd known that the boy they disliked was a real Samson in strength and agility they wouldn't have taken the chances with him for a moment.

But Joe had not been called upon to demonstrate the latent energy stored up in his stalwart frame, and his great good nature and easy ways disarmed any suspicion of his actual physical resources. So one afternoon Joe was a bit surprised when Coyne approached him in a friendly way and suggested that now he had been four months with Mr. Edgerton he join the Benevolent and Protective Order of the Cavaliers of Coveo.

"We're all in it, Samson," he said, "and unless you become one of us you will not be treated in the social and confidential manner that you may think yourself entitled to."

"Well, I have no objection to joining the organization if it's all right," replied Joe, without any suspicion that Coyne was putting up a job on him.

"It's all right, I assure you. The initiation fee is \$5 and the dues \$1 a month. That won't break you."

"No, I guess I can stand it."

"The benefits attached to it are many, one of which is \$2 a week for thirteen weeks in a year if you are taken sick and are incapacitated for that number of weeks during twelve months running. We have a ball and entertainment during the winter and a grand picnic excursion in the summer. There are other advantages that you will learn after you have become a member. The initiation is not so strenuous that you can't stand it, and you will get a grip and a password. Then you will be one of us, and that will wipe out any coldness that you heretofore have noticed in our treatment of you. Well, what do you say? Shall I put your name up at our meeting to-night?"

"Yes," replied Joe, pleased at the idea of getting on a more social standing with his office mates.

"Very good. I'm an officer of the order, and will see that you are accepted. Then you will receive notice when to attend the initiation. There are three degrees, and all are worked in succession, which shows you that there is nothing serious about them."

Joe nodded, and Clarence Coyne left him to hold a jollification meeting with his fellow conspirators, who at once proceeded to devise the different things they would run in on the lad they disliked.

CHAPTER XV.—Conclusion.

The meeting of the conspirators was held in a small room at the back of the office which had a window overlooking the yard. Unknown to the

disgruntled clerks, Danny was standing just under the window at the time they held their consultation, and he heard all the particulars of the game they proposed to work off on Joe.

"If dat wouldn't jar yer! So dem fellers are puttin' up a job on Joe. Goin' to work wot dey call de Y'yal Skyfugle an' Full Moon degrees on him. Ho! ho! ho! Jes' let 'em try it on. Dey don't know wot dey're up agin'. He could twist dem geezers all around his fingers an' never know dat he wuz exertin' himself. Gee! Dis is de best ever!" And Danny chuckled long and loudly.

He decided, however, to put Joe on to the conspiracy, so he would be better prepared to deal with his enemies. He did so that evening, after supper, and Joe could hardly believe that his office mates contemplated playing such a mean trick on him. Danny assured him that they meant business, and suggested that he should not let on that he was wise to their game.

"Jest yer go to de initiation, an' let dem try a few t'ings on yer. Yer kin stand de racket all right. Den when dey git too rough yer kin do a little initiatin' yerself. Jest show dem dat youse kin work de R'yal Skyfugle an' Full Moon degrees better'n demselves, an' dey'll let yer alone after dat."

Joe smiled and made no reply, and the subject was dismissed. Next day Clarence Coyne informed Joe that he had been accepted as a candidate for the order, but he took care not to say anything about Skyfugle and Full Moon degrees, lest Joe should become suspicious that the order wasn't straight. On Saturday Joe received a printed notice, filled in in writing, notifying him to appear at the rooms of the order to undergo the initiation. He chuckled as he read it, and told Coyne he would be present. Clarence said he would call at his house for him and take him to the rooms.

"I'm to be initiated Tuesday evening, Danny," he said to his young friend when they went to supper that night.

"Dat so?" grinned the tough lad. "I wish I could go, too, an' look on. It'll be as good as the circus."

"I trust they won't exert themselves too much, or they may not be able to work next morning," said Joe solemnly.

"I'll bet dey'll know more when dey git t'rough dan dey know now."

"Experience is a good teacher."

"Betcher life it is! Dey'll git all de experience dey want if yer let yerself out. I'm t'inkin' dat de Cavaliers of Coveo will be a sick lookin' lot of guys after dey git t'rough wit' dat initiation."

Tuesday night came around in due course, and Clarence Coyne also came around to Joe's room, where he found the boy and Danny playing a game of checkers.

"Come on, Samson," said Coyne. "It is time we were on our way."

The checker game came to an abrupt conclusion and Joe put on his hat and accompanied the book-keeper.

Danny put on his hat, too, and followed them at a distance. Clarence took Joe to the rooms of the Windy City Social Club, of which he and the other clerks were members. There were a dozen others connected with the organization, and they

had been taken into the secret. They were not to take an active part in the ceremonies, however, as Clarence and the clerks desired to have all the fun to themselves. They had it, as the sequel proved. Joe was left to cool his heels in the ante-room until the crowd was ready for him. Finally everything was prepared. Clarence came to him and told him to take off his coat, which he did.

The bookkeeper then blindfolded him securely and led him into the meeting-room. We will not describe the various ridiculous stunts that Joe was put through. The initiation was comparatively easy at first, but it gradually grew more strenuous. Joe took it all good-naturedly, and allowed his fellow clerks to bang him around to suit their humor.

"What an easy mark!" grinned Clarence. "We will now proceed with the third and last degree," he said aloud. "This is the Royal Skyfugle, and will make the applicant a full member of the Benevolent and Protective Order of the Cavaliers of Coveo."

He directed Joe to mount a table, helping him up. As Joe got up he reached down where he suspected that Clarence stood, and securing a grip on the bookkeeper's collar, he raised that astonished young man right up beside him with one arm. An exclamation of astonishment greeted this exhibition of strength on the part of the candidate. Joe tore the bandage from his eyes and looked around the room.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I think that I am perfectly familiar with the workings of the Royal Skyfugle degree, and I will now proceed to do a little initiating myself."

Thereupon he grabbed Clarence by the legs and stood him on his head, holding him in that undignified attitude in spite of his frantic struggles to release himself.

A roar of laughter from the members of the Windy City Social Club who were looking on testified their appreciation of this unexpected turn in affairs. Joe then swung Clarence, who was a thin little fellow, around his head with the greatest of ease, holding him by the ankles. The bookkeeper was frightened to death.

"This is what we call Swing the Club," said Joe cheerfully, "and is a very interesting part of the Skyfugle degree."

Putting Clarence on his feet, he secured another grip on his collar and held him out at arm's length beyond the edge of the table, thereby demonstrating the strength in his muscular arm.

"This, gentlemen, is where the candidate is held in suspense," said Joe.

"Great Scott! That chap is a veritable giant!" cried one of the spectators.

"For Heaven's sake let me go!" cried Clarence Coyne almost piteously.

"Oh, no; you're not half through the degree yet," replied Joe.

The doorkeeper had become so interested in the new performance that he failed to see Danny slip inside the room and take a back seat.

Joe grabbed Clarence with both hands and threw him eight feet away on to a mattress which had already been used on Joe himself. The young contractor then jumped down and seized two of

the astonished conspirators and sprang on the table with them, holding each by his collar. He held both out at arm's length, and put them through various stunts that convulsed the spectators. Then he went for the last two of his enemies and chased them around the room till he caught them. He did a few things to them and then announced that the Royal Skyfugle degree was over. He made the conspirators line up before him, however, which they did with great meekness.

"Now, my friends, let me give you a few words of advice. The next time you try to work off a lot of monkey shines on a chap make sure that he's just got out of the hospital. I was dead on to you from the start. You put this job up on me to try and do me up because you're jealous of me at the office. I advise you to cut such capers out in the future. To show you that I feel no ill-will toward you, let's shake hands and be good friends hereafter. It won't be my fault if we aren't. You'll find I'm a better friend than an enemy."

Four of the conspirators gave in and shook hands with him, but it was many a day thereafter before Clarence Coyne got over his chagrin at the handling he had received from Joe and consented to speak to him, except on business.

Joe's prowess became the talk of the social club, and it spread about among their friends. A reporter heard about the "initiation," secured the particulars, and published them, to the great disgust of the conspirators. Joe joined the social club, and became very popular from the start. A few months later he was detached from the office and made an acting superintendent on the new aqueduct, a section of which Mr. Edgerton had the contract for. A year later he became superintendent of an important job in the next State. Joe's success was now assured, and having saved his money, Mr. Edgerton gave him an interest in the business, taking his note for most of the investment. To-day Joe is an equal partner in the business, with considerable money, and on the high road to fortune. He lives in a fine house in Chicago, the mistress of which was once known as Jennie Rulofson. Danny Mann is a boss foreman, and doing fine. No one, to see him now, would think that once he was a tough, friendless waif. And so we drop our curtain on Samson the boy blacksmith, who rose from the anvil to fortune and success.

Next week's issue will contain "BOB'S BIG RISK; OR, THE CHANCE THAT CAME BUT ONCE."

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Ninety Degrees South

or, Lost in the Land of Ice

By GASTON GARNE

(A Serial Story.)

CHAPTER III (Continued)

"If I have to follow the eightieth parallel right around the world I'll find a way through the barrier yet, professor," said the captain, in a tone of quiet decision. "Come, we can do nothing more to-night at any rate, and I feel just like a game of chess."

"I believe he will find a way through," said Phil.

"So do I," said Dick.

"Well, I'd like to stand by Uncle Jerry, and I don't want to go back on you boys," said Sadie, "so I just won't say anything but that I hope the best man may win."

"Supper's ready, folkses," said Jim, coming forward, wrapped from head to foot in a big coat of white fur in contrast to which his black face seemed blacker still, "an' ef yo' don' want'er be plumb friz up, I 'vise yo' ter come an' eat it."

The next day they cruised along the barrier till they found an opening, which they followed for ten miles, only to come out into the open sea again, with the great ice wall still shutting off their way to the south.

They found another opening later in the day, but at the end of a mile or two it came to an abrupt ending, and they were obliged to turn back.

Captain Essex was determined not to abandon his search, and these failures simply stimulated him to renewed exertions.

For a week he cruised along the barrier, trying every opening which seemed to show any promise of leading to the south, and failing in every attempt.

On both sides the immense barrier of ice arose before him, barring his way and seeming to say to him that thus far and no farther should he go.

There was no chance of landing and pushing into the interior should the barrier be regarded as the limit of navigation, for the cliffs of glittering ice rose sheer from the waters to a height of anywhere from a hundred to a thousand feet, and no one knew how far back they extended.

"It is simply an ice barrier, that is all," said Phil to Dick. "There is open water and land beyond, and I believe that our captain will get through it."

"He certainly believes it himself," said Sadie, "and that's half the fight. I think if you are all going to believe that I'll have to go over to your side, and leave Uncle Jerry alone in the belief that we will never get beyond the barrier."

"We'll get beyond it if anybody can," said Phil.

At last one day they entered an opening where the walls of ice were but little higher than the tops of the masts, and where there seemed to be every evidence of their having found a way through.

They made three or four turns, keeping in a general southerly direction, however, and at length struck into a broad lane leading due south, and extending in nearly a straight line for two miles.

Then they made a number of sharp turns, and at last came to the mouth of a great cave, through which the current seemed to flow, but the outlet of which could not be seen.

The entrance was wide enough and high enough for the Pioneer to have entered, but the captain wished to explore the place first before venturing in, and ordered one of the boats lowered.

Phil, Dick and Professor Waddles were among the first to enter, Sadie scrambling in next, being taken for one of the boys in the confusion.

"If Uncle Jerry goes I've got to go to take care of him," she said, as she took a seat next to Phil in the stern sheets, and no one objected.

Three or four sailors went along to man the boat, and Phil steered straight for the middle of the channel.

Under glittering arches of ice, which gave forth all the colors of the rainbow, they went, the place being wide enough for their vessel for a considerable distance.

They made a sharp turn, and proceeded, trusting to see an opening ahead of them, when all at once they heard a sound like the report of many cannon, the water was churned into foam, and they were tossed about like a cork on the waves.

Then when the water became quiet once more they looked back and saw to their horror that several large masses of ice had fallen and completely blocked the way behind them.

Unless they found another opening ahead of them they might be shut up forever in the ice cave, with no hope of escape.

CHAPTER IV.

An Exciting Race.

"What is to become of us now?" exclaimed Professor Waddles. "Here we are, shut up in a cave of ice. What's going to become of us, I say?"

"Get out the best way we can," said Phil. "We don't know whether we are shut up or not, and it's time to give up when there is no longer any hope."

"But you can't see the ship, and so we must be shut up," persisted Waddles, who delighted in nothing more than he did in an argument, glaring at Phil through his big glasses and pursing up his lips. "If we could see the ship, we would not be shut up."

"Pull easy, men," said Phil, turning the boat's head, "and we'll see if there is a way out or not."

There was plenty of light from somewhere in the ice cavern, and Phil directed the boat towards where the masses of ice had fallen.

The passage in had been completely choked, and neither on the surface nor above was there any sign of an opening.

"Hallo!" shouted Phil, wondering if he could attract the attention of those on board the vessel.

In an instant the call was echoed from above

and from all sides, dying away at last to the faintest whisper.

There was no answering hail from the Pioneer, however, and then Phil said:

"Suppose we all hail her at once. Then they may hear us. Now, then, all together!"

"Hallo, Pioneer!" they all shouted, as loud as they could call.

There was a perfectly deafening repetition of the sound, and Sadie covered her ears and said:

"Why, this is a very cave of echoes. I won't dare to whisper a secret in this place for fear it will be carried all around."

"Hark!" cried Phil in a moment. "What is that?"

They all heard a loud, deep sound, ending in a perfect shriek.

"Mercy on us! Is the place haunted?" cried Waddles.

"That's the Pioneer's whistle," said Phil. "They are signalling to us."

In a moment the sound was twice repeated, the two whistles being given in quick succession.

"Pull away, men," said Phil. "I think they mean to go ahead and try to cut a passage to us through the ice."

The boat retreated a considerable distance and then there came another shrill blast from outside the cave, and a few moments later they could feel a decided shock, and then masses of ice began to fall into the water.

"He can never blow up the ice," said Professor Waddles. "That's been tried before and doesn't work."

"No, but he can force his way through it," said Phil. "The Pioneer's bow is sharp and very strong, and was built purposely for ramming the ice floes. That's what Captain Essex is doing, you may be sure."

More ice fell, and presently a stream of light poured into the cavern from above their heads, and then they heard the sound of the whistle much more distinctly than before.

Then more ice fell, and soon they saw the sharp bow of the Pioneer force its way through a mass of broken ice, and in a moment saw Captain Harry Essex himself on the bridge.

All hands set up a shout, and then as the vessel slowly advanced, sending out clouds of black smoke, Phil cried:

"We're all right, captain. Shall we come aboard?"

"Do you see any light ahead of you, Mr. Freeman?"

"No, sir, not as if there were an opening."

"What height do you find?"

"Enough for the Pioneer, if the walls don't fall in again."

"That's just it. I don't want to take that risk. Go ahead some and see what you find."

Phil gave the orders and the boat shot ahead.

They pulled for a mile or more, making a turn which shut the Pioneer from sight, and then Phil suddenly cried:

"There's a light ahead; there's a way out of this at last!"

"That's good enough for the boat," muttered Waddles, "but it won't do for your ship. Do you see how low the roof of your cavern is?"

"I declare, Uncle Jerry, you are just too mean,

said Sadie. "It looks just as if you didn't want us to accomplish what we came for."

"H'm! Bless my soul, child, if I did not discover the obstacles, we wouldn't get anywhere," muttered Waddles. "It isn't that I don't want Captain Essex to succeed, but I don't want to get him into troubles that he can't get out of."

"I believe you are right, sir," said Phil, when they had gone several boat lengths further.

"The roof of the cavern is much lower than it was, and is growing still lower. I am afraid we could never take the Pioneer through it, even if we housed our masts and took in our smoke-stack."

"Don't give up just because I said so, my boy," grunted the eccentric man. "Better go ahead and get the exact height."

Phil sent the boat ahead a quarter of a mile, by which time the passage had not only grown much lower, but had narrowed as well and was becoming still narrower.

"Everything's against us," muttered Phil, impatiently. "The depth is even less than it was at first, and it looks to me as if we might ground if we went further, for I declare, I can see bottom and I couldn't do that before."

"What sort of place is it, anyhow?" asked Sadie, in a tone of disgust.

"It seems to me nothing more than another of our blind alleys," said Phil. "The barrier is nothing but a collection of icebergs, and no doubt there are many waterways and misleading passages in the mass which is constantly changing. Whether we can ever get through it or not is another matter, however."

"Now you are throwing cold water on the expedition," cried Sadie. "I do declare, I thought you were more hopeful, Phil Freeman, but you're just as bad as Uncle Jerry."

Phil laughed and then told the men to hold water for a few moments.

"What do you think, Dick?" he asked. "Is there any use in going any further? The Pioneer can never get through, that's plain enough, but whether it's worth while to investigate further is another matter."

"I don't see much need, as long as the Pioneer can't get through."

At that moment several sharp cracks were heard, and Phil gave the word to pull ahead.

The sounds were repeated, and then several splashes were heard, followed by two or three sharp reports.

"The whole thing is falling, seems to me," said Sadie.

"The berg is simply squeezing together," remarked Waddles. "It often happens that a change of wind causes——"

"Pull ahead!" shouted Phil, as two or three more sharp reports were heard. "If we get out of here we're lucky."

Several great masses of ice had fallen behind them, and they knew not at what moment the passage through the berg might be closed up.

Two bergs may have come together at the top and formed the cave, and if these tops gave way the bases might come together and the space between cease to exist.

(To be continued.)

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INTERESTING ARTICLES

"BEATING THE BOUNDS"

An old custom has been revived at Newport, Isle of Wight, called "beating the bounds." It is an annual survey by the officials of the town. The procession, made up of the governing body and boys of the neighborhood, march around the boundaries of the town, the boys carrying willow wands with which they "strike the confines." The custom survived in the United States up to the nineteenth century.

SCHOOL WITH GLASS WALLS WILL BE BUILT IN BERLIN

The Steglitz District of the German capital is to have an enormous new public school constructed practically entirely of glass.

According to the plans approved today, the building will consist of a frame of steel and concrete, with outside walls of heavy plate glass. The partitions separating the classrooms will also consist of glass.

The idea is to bring as much sunlight cheer to the teachers and pupils as possible. To carry the cheerfulness still further, the new school will be surrounded by a beautiful park, visible from every section of the building, even the inside rooms. If the experiment is successful all new schools here will be built along the same lines.

WRITTEN DANCE SCORE SETS A STANDARD

Parisian—and other—dancers, whether of the waltz, the two-step or the Charleston, may find themselves called on to be more precise in their gyrations and to indulge less in "personal gestures."

A system has been invented, and may be brought into general use, by which all the steps of a dance are expressed in written or printed notation. Not only each step, but each turn of the body as well, can be indicated on the printed music page. Instead of the customary five lines, seven are used, and on these each group of notes

in the rhythm of the dance is accompanied by signs denoting the precise position of the feet and attitude of the body.

A dot on one of the lines indicates the step, each line being reserved for an individual step. One upright stroke to the right or left, before the dot, indicates the direction of the step, while circular steps are denoted by horizontal strokes. Symbols over the dots indicate the extent of the turn: A quarter circle, half circle or whole circle denoting respectively a quarter, half or full turn.

It is pointed out that this notation system will enable the creator of a new dance to have his work copyrighted. On the other hand, a critical observer of a dance will be able to detect the false steps that are taken, precisely as a musical critic can detect the false notes that are played or sung. Whether the average dancer will be willing to study the printed notation and adhere strictly to the printed steps is another question.

LAUGHS

A NOVEL WELCOME

"Who is your prisoner?"
"The Prisoner of Zenda."
"Zenda in."

—Annapolis Log.

SILVER TREADS

An optimist is a woman who looks for gray hairs through smoked glasses.

—U. of S. California Wampus.

AS THE FELLER SAID—

As the traffic cop said after arresting the speeder, "I pulled a fast one that time."

—Annapolis Log.

GIRAFFE

They call that gal Giraffe because she's all neck and has a spotted career.

—Michigan Gargoyle.

A SUMMER IDYL

"This sort of thing can't go on," announced the two hundred and forty pounder as she tried to struggle into her slim sonority sister's one-piece bathing suit.

—U. of S. Calif. Wampus.

MASHED IN ADVANCE

"Why are you running a steam roller over that field?" asked the stranger.

"I'm trying to raise mashed potatoes," explained the farmer.

—Lehigh Burr.

Angry Wife: Will you tell me what the long red hair on your coat means?

Corrected Husband: My dear, that means just one thing—trouble!

—M. I. T. Voo Doo.

NO OUTLET

Philip: I hate those revolving doors.

Morris: So do I. You can't slam them when you're mad.

—Princeton Tiger.

Near To Death

"Charley, will you step this way a moment?"

"Yes, sir," replied a bright and merry-looking lad. "What do you wish, sir?"

"I want you to go to Staten Island for me, and right away, in the bargain. Get ready, and then I'll tell you what I want done."

"All right, sir," and Charley Green disappeared for a few minutes, to reappear ready for a start.

"Now, Charley," said Mr. Reynolds, Charley's employer, and one of the largest dealers, "I'll tell you what I want you to do. First, here is five hundred dollars, and be careful not to lose it. You are to deliver it to Sidney Banks, the oysterman, in person. You know the man, do you not?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you know where he lives?"

"No, sir."

"I'll give you directions, then," and Mr. Reynolds here gave Charley a minute description of the route he was to pursue, and wound up by saying:

"Now, let me caution you again about not losing the money, for Banks has a mortgage due to-morrow which he wants to pay off with this money. It will be dark by the time you get there, I suppose. Tell Banks I could not send it any sooner, and lastly, here is five dollars to pay your own expenses should you be obliged to stay all night."

"Thank you," said Charley, pocketing the five-spot. "Anything more?"

"No."

"Good-day," and Charley left the office, and, jumping into a West street car, was soon on his way down-town to the Staten Island boats.

He reached Banks' house, as Mr. Reynolds had conjectured he would, just about dark.

Walking up the narrow path that ran between rows of beds planted with various kinds of garden truck, he stepped on the little porch, and knocked at the door.

It was answered by a pale, worn-looking little woman, whose face lighted up at seeing him, for she instantly conjectured that he bore with him the money that was to clear off the mortgage which had hung over them for a long while, a very bugbear, and which, if unmet on the morrow, meant a foreclosure and a loss of their home.

"Is Mr. Banks at home?" inquired Charley.

"No; but he will be in about two hours. Won't you come in?"

"Thank you; yes," and he followed her into the best room, which she opened for his accommodation.

"Are you from New York?" she asked, as he sat down.

"Yes."

"From Mr. Reynolds?"

"Yes."

She gave a sigh of relief, and after a moment's silence, asked if he had been to supper.

"No," replied the lad.

"I'll get you some, then; for if you walked over from the station you must be both tired and hungry."

And despite his remonstrances she immediately left the room, and Charley heard the pans and kettles rattling in a way that sounded very sweet, for he really felt almost in that state which is defined by saying: "I'm as hungry as a bear."

She invited him into the kitchen a short while later, and Charley was soon discussing in a vigorous manner the food she had prepared.

While still eating a knock came at the kitchen-door, and in response to an invitation to "Come in," it was opened, and a dark-featured, squat-figured person stepped into the room.

"Good-evening, Jerry," said Mrs. Banks.

"Good-evening to you," was Jerry Black's response, delivered in a somewhat gruff tone, while at the same time he was sharply eyeing Charley. "My old woman wants to know if you can let her have some tea—just a little bit—till she goes to the store to-morrow."

"Yes, I guess I can spare a little," and going to the cupboard, from a canister she took a few ounces, which she gave the man.

"Banks ain't home, eh?"

"No."

"How about his mortgage to-morrow?"

"That is provided for," and Mrs. Banks glanced toward where Charley was sitting.

"I'm much obliged to you; good-night."

"Good-night," and the door closed behind the man as Mrs. Banks returned his parting salutation.

"Who is he?" asked Charley.

"A fisherman—at times."

"Why, is he ever anything else?"

"Yes, drunk."

"So. He has a sneaking, hang-dog look, and to tell the truth I wouldn't like to have him get a grudge against me," and as Charley finished speaking he shoved away from the table to show that he had eaten enough.

It was stifling indoors, and he determined to go out into the open air.

The house was within fifty or seventy-five feet off the beach, and thither he directed his footsteps.

He walked along, occasionally stopping as some sound struck his ear, until he was at least a half mile from the home of the Banks'.

The eastern horizon was just becoming tinged with the rays which dart up preceding the rising of the moon on a hot night.

As he stood watching, the light grew stronger, and just as the first silvery edge of Luna appeared, a step behind startled him.

He attempted to turn around, but too late; a heavy club, wielded by a pair of powerful arms, descended on his head with terrific force, and he sank upon the sand, senseless.

With a chuckle of satisfaction, the brute who had struck the blow, and who proved to be Jerry Black, stooped over the body and rifled the pockets of their contents.

"By gum, but I believe I've cooked his goose. Shall I leave him here? No, I guess I'd better not. I can get my boat in about a jiffy, and then I'll take him out and tumble him in the bay."

He disappeared up the beach, but presently came back with a boat, which he grounded a few feet from the unfortunate lad, who, by this time, began to show signs of returning consciousness.

Picking him up, Black tumbled him into his boat, and shoving off, headed her out into the bay; but, a moan escaping Charley's lips made him drop his oars, and before he resumed them he gagged and bound his victim's hands.

Out, out he went, until Staten Island was quite a distance astern.

Then he prepared to throw overboard the now conscious lad, who fully realized from Black's movements what his intentions were in regard to himself.

He struggled to unloose his hands to burst the rope that bound them, but to no purpose were his frantic efforts, he had been bound too securely.

Jerry Black had served one or two terms in Sing Sing and at Trenton State Prison for various misdemeanors, and was a hardened wretch.

He picked up Charley and prepared to fling him into the water, when he suddenly stopped and laid him down.

This was caused by the approach of a side-wheel steamer out in the bay for some purpose.

But she was but a few hundred yards distant, the moon became obscured by some clouds which passed below it, and after a moment's hesitation Black tumbled his living freight overboard.

Down, down went Charley; then he returned to the surface; but with his hands useless he could do nothing, and, moreover, the steamer had changed her course, and he was directly in her track.

He sank and rose again.

The vessel was near—oh, how near!

He was about sinking once more, when, by a superhuman effort, he strained the knot that tied his hands together; an instant later they were free.

The steamer's bow brushed him aside, and she rapidly came onward.

A minute—a half—and he would be under her wheels, which, striking him, meant death; and, verily, he was near it.

But just at this juncture a wild shriek rang out, a scream of distress, a cry for help.

The pilot, seeing the small boat so near the bow, it being revealed by the now unclouded moon, instantly rang to back her, and just as the wheel-buckets would have crushed in the skull of the helpless lad, the wheel was suddenly reversed, and he was thrown away from it.

But who had so opportunely cried out?

After Jerry Black threw Charley overboard he stood upright in his boat, wishing to make sure of his disappearing beneath the waters, never to rise again in life.

He saw the lad rise and sink the second time, and saw that the boy was in the steamer's course.

He saw the bow as it reached the lad, and then—

It seemed as if there must have been some guardian angel watching over Charley, for just at the moment when the villain thought all evidence of his crime was gone, one of the dolphins, which can be seen disporting themselves in the waters of the bay at almost any time, frightened by the steamer's approach, threw himself above the water, and striking Black fair in the stomach, it nearly winded him, and as he went overboard backwards he uttered the shrill cry for help which, although it saved his life, also sent him

to Sing Sing for twenty years, as it saved the life of the lad he would have murdered.

Seeing Black struggling in the water, one of the deck-hands jumped overboard to his assistance, and supported him until they were within reach of a line thrown them from the steamer's deck.

They were drawn up and were about to proceed when a faint moaning sound from Charley, who had hoped they would see him, was heard by those on deck, and a close bobbing above the water.

Jerry Black started violently, when, a few minutes after Charley had been discovered, he raised up from where he had been laid on the deck, and saw the figure of his intended victim standing closely beside him.

Several hours later they landed in New York City, and after Charley had his wounds dressed, and saw the would-be murderer in custody, he went to bed and slept for a few hours.

He was up betimes, and, although stiff and sore, with the recovered money in his pocket, he felt as happy as a king.

He took the first boat to Staten Island, and hurried as quickly as possible to Sidney Banks' house, and arrived just in the nick of time to save a deal of trouble by giving Banks the money to pay off his importune creditor.

Jerry Black was tried for the offense, and, as we have before intimated, was given twenty years' board at the expense of the State.

HORSES ARE AT THE VANISHING POINT ON LONDON'S THOROUGHFARES

London is saying good-by to the horse. The briskness of trade some weeks ago at the Elephant and Castle Repository—London's only remaining salesyard of "general purpose" horses—is evidence of this fact.

Jovial countrymen toyed with straws or latting harness while 250 horses were put up for sale. The number offered did not mean that the popularity of the horse is likely to be revived. A leading London contractor was selling every horse, van and harness set, "owing to now using only motor transport," as the catalogue phrased it. A large firm of mineral water manufacturers, which is "replacing with motors," also offered horses and harness.

One hundred London railway horses were offered for sale, and beneath the Southern Railway's offer of thirty horses appeared the words: "Being sold owing to further adoption of motors."

Most of the horses were purchased by farmers for from 10 to 14 guineas (\$50 to \$70), and will perhaps work out the rest of their lives jogging along in the more congenial atmosphere of country lanes. Others will eventually find their way to the canal towing path.

The few remaining London "cabbies" are gradually giving up the losing battle with taxis. The "growler," like the old hansom cab, is passing away, and will only reappear in the case of national emergency like the great strike. Thirty years ago London was full of cab yards, some of which held as many as 200 cabs and employed about fifty horsekeepers.

GOOD READING

WHAT BRITISH LISTENERS ENJOY ON THE AIR

Twenty-five thousand ballots mailed to the British Broadcasting Company by members of the Wireless League, organized to determine the desires of the public in regard to programs, resulted as follows: 1, military bands; 2, light orchestral music; 3, variety; 4, instrumental solos, and 5, church services. Thirteenth on the list of fourteen items came "foreign stations," while "talks" were last.

In most cases studio performances were preferred, with a notable exception in the case of church services, which were liked better when relayed from a place of worship.

Dance music was seventh in order of preference.

It is pointed out that membership of the league, however, is small compared with the number of listeners, though it is drawn from all classes of the community.

THE SOVIET AND WOMEN'S VEILS

Something like a merry war is being waged in Turkestan over women's veils. Turkestan, politically a member of the Union of Soviet Republics, is overwhelmingly Mohammedan. Because of their faith, the women still wear the characteristic veil, which used to be universal in Mohammedan countries, though it has now been abolished in Turkey and denounced by the Soviet as a badge of women's inferiority.

After an attempt to abolish it the chief of the Moslem clergy of Tchusta, one Abbas Maksumoff, called together a conference of mullahs and influential peasants and induced it to appeal to the people against the Soviet propaganda, declaring to them that "a woman who discards the veil is not a legitimate wife, and a man who permits his wife to perform so dishonorable an act is himself an infidel."

Then a Soviet Commissar called a meeting to agitate against the wearing of veils. Thereupon Abbas Maksumoff rallied his followers to the defense of the Koran and, invading the office of the Commissar, tried to destroy it, killing a soldier stationed there as a guard.

MARCASITE USED FOR ORNAMENTS

In the revival of marcasite, especially for use in bracelets, earrings and brooches, the world of fashion is witnessing one of its most familiar phenomena—the return to favor of an old, a very old, material. Marcasite has been known for many centuries, and every now and then the jewelers put forth new designs in the burnished, steel-gray mineral with its gleams and glints of light.

Marcasite is really pyrite, or iron pyrites—chemically, ferro-disulphide. Its possibilities in the way of jewelry making attracted manufacturers of ornaments long ago, and they used it for buttons, shoe and belt buckles, and for other personal adornments. About 150 years ago mar-

casite was much liked by sword makers, who adorned the hilts of the weapons and their scabbards with this material.

A famous sword of George Washington, which was sent to him, according to legend, by Frederick the Great of Prussia—"from the oldest General in the world"—has a hilt of marcasite.

Iron pyrites, of which marcasite is one form, once played an interesting role in an incident of American history as "fools' gold." Some of the early settlers or explorers of Virginia, finding the iron pyrites there in abundance, thought that they had discovered wonderfully rich stores of gold, and loaded a vessel bound for England with the stuff. When it reached the other side, the chemists there were not long in discovering its real nature, and were greatly amused at the expense of the disappointed colonists.

STRONG PAPER MADE FROM FIBRE OF WILD SPECIES OF PINEAPPLE

Man's increasing need for paper long since led him from the ragbag to the forests. The forests have furnished him wood pulp paper for books, for newsprint and for the cheaper writing materials, but he has had to go back to the ragbag for the stronger stuff needed for ledgers, bonds and currency. For bag or wrapping paper old rope and waste tow were also utilized, but rag and rope stock fall short, and man has had to fare forth anew in search of materials for durable paper.

A promising material, reported from the tropical jungle, is caroa, a member of the pineapple family. Natives of Brazil from time immemorial have gone into the wilds to cut the long narrow leaves. They beat them between stones to separate the fiber and after combing and washing, weave the fiber into twine for nets, fishing lines and ropes. Caroa, it has been found, can be made into paper.

In the laboratory, caroa was evolved from rope into paper. The rope was cut into inch lengths, then threshed, cooked in a solution of caustic soda, bleached and beaten, until no lumps or knots were left. The stock was poured into a mold, where the sheet of pulp was formed immediately on wire. The sheet was then pressed and rolled and air dried.

Laboratory tests were followed by others in the experimental paper mill of the Bureau of Standards. The product was found to have a bursting strength the same as that specified for the best papers made from rag or rope. Caroa fibers are cylindrical, comparatively long and of small diameter, properties which enable them to felt easily, giving compactness and strength to the sheet.

There is no caroa industry at present, but a supply might be had if permanent demand were sufficient to make harvesting and transporting worth while. Aside from its fiber, caroa is said to yield other valuable materials—gum, oil, balsam, pitch and acid.

CURRENT NEWS

TIGHTEN PARKING RULE ON MANY
NEW YORK STREETS

Automobiles parking from 7 A. M. to 10 A. M. and from 5 P. M. to 7 P. M. on several busy streets is banned in an order issued recently by Police Commissioner Warren. The order will become effective in a short time, when warning signs have been erected. All streets included are two-way traffic lanes. Sundays and holidays are excepted in the new regulations.

The streets are Fulton, from Greenwich to Pearl; Chambers, from Greenwich to Park Row; New Chambers, from Park Row to Pearl; Grand, from Varick to Allen; 14th Street, from Fourth to Eighth Avenues; 23d Street, from Fourth to Eighth Avenues; 34th, 42nd and 57th Streets, from Eighth Avenue to Park Avenue, and 59th Street, from Second Avenue to Fifth Avenues.

The order permits automobiles to stop to receive or discharge passengers and vehicles actually loading or unloading merchandise.

GREAT SHIP DISASTERS

The following list of ship disasters of recent years has been compiled by The Associated Press:

1898—La Burgoyne, collision with British ship Cromartyshire, 560 lives lost.

1904—General Slocum (excursion steamer), burned in East River, New York, 1,021.

1904—Norge, wrecked off Scotland, 646.

1912—Titanic, sunk in collision with iceberg in north Atlantic Ocean, 1,517.

1912—Japanese steamer Kicker Maru, sunk off coast of Japan, 1,000.

1914—Empress of Ireland, sunk in collision with Danish collier Storstad, 1,024.

1915—Eastland (excursion steamer), overturned in Chicago River, 812.

1915—Lusitania, sunk by German submarine, 1,198.

1916—Chinese steamer Hsin Yu sunk off China, 1,000.

1916—French auxiliary cruiser Provence, sunk in Mediterranean, 1,250.

1917—British warship Vanguard, explosion, 800.

1918—Japanese battleship Kowachi, explosion, 500.

1918—Cyclops, unheard from after leaving Barbados, 283.

1921—Hongkong, wrecked off Swatow, China, 1,000.

OLD-TIME CABBY STRUTS HIS LITTLE
HOUR

He is one of the sturdy survivors. He is a cabby—a man of spirit, too. Though his vehicle is a victoria propelled by horse power in the flesh, he will not be elbowed out by chauffeurs, not by an army of chauffeurs.

He is a cabby with a smart whip which he can crack with the best of the old-timers. And now and then comes a chance really to hold for a charmed moment the centre of the stage. The

lines of commerce surge along the Avenue, north-bound, south-bound. For miles they stretch, forward and back, flowing, crowding, impatient. But the lights in the traffic towers change from green to red. The traffic cop holds up his hand; blows his whistle. The cross street has its chance now and the Avenue must wait.

He is a cabby, and, as it happens, has just reached the impasse, which is a whistle—shrill, commanding—and a lifted white-gloved hand. The cabby reins in his horse. With an imperious sweep of his arm he signifies to the line he heads, the line of motor cars behind him, that progress must surrender to pause. There he sits as the proud head of the procession; and there is a kind of splendor in the poised, arresting power of that arm. It is a gesture. Yes, it is superb, in a way.

Presently the lights will change again from red to green; again the traffic cop's whistle will blow and the lines of commerce will press forward in their eager march. The cab driver—so imperious now, so the master of the situation—will become once more just a rather forlorn old-time figure, slumped on his box behind a horse that clomp-clomps on the pavement. But while the spell endures, he is a kind of king, an imperator.

REDEEMING RAILROAD TICKETS CALLS
FOR A RESOURCEFUL MAN

The man who redeems unused railroad tickets has his troubles. He must meet all kinds of people and never lose his temper. He must know all kinds of tickets and what their redemption value is. He must examine tickets, answer questions, count out money and smile—all at the same time. If he has any time left he must spend it studying the new ticket forms constantly being devised by the railroad's passenger department.

People want all kinds of tickets redeemed for all kinds of reasons. First in line at the window may be a stenographer who bought a ticket to the shore, only to learn that she had to work Saturday afternoon and could not use it. Next to her is a man who bought a round-trip ticket to New York and did not use the return trip because a friend of his brought him back in his automobile.

While the ticket redemption clerk knows the fares between a great many points, he cannot be expected to remember all of them. There are single fares, round-trip fares, one-day excursion fares, sixteen-day excursion fares, fares for the clergy, for railroad employes, for commuters. Beside the ticket redemption clerk is the typical railroad office is a rack containing lists of the fares to all points.

A man will come to the window with a part of a commutation ticket which he wants to have redeemed. The redemption clerk must figure out its value very carefully. Commutation tickets are sold at rates considerably under the one-way fare. When unused portions of a commutation ticket are redeemed the rides used are reckoned at the regular one-way fare. This usually results in a storm of protest as the average commuter thinks he should be charged for the rides used only at the special low fare.

Fame and Fortune Weekly

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